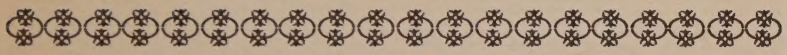
For Father on his
Eighty-fifth birthday
from Madge.
with many thanks for the
Western trip - 1930.

THE WISSAHICKON HILLS

INDIAN ROCK BRIDGE

The WISSAHICKON HILLS

MEMORIES
OF
LEISURE HOURS OUT OF DOORS
IN AN OLD COUNTRYSIDE



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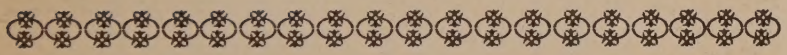

"The best thing that we're put here
for's to see."
FROST

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TO

S·M·W· C·N·W· *and* A·M·W·

·PREFACE·

THIS is a book made out of many memories of boyhood, a good few of youth, and a steadily lessening number from subsequent years, from early manhood, from middle age and from the edge of old age. The most of the chapters were written in my thirties, and practically all of them from the angle of those years. They have some of them been in print before, in magazines. They make up a book almost wholly of out-of-doors, by one who has cared more for walking across country and for noting the little wonders seen by the way than for any other kind of leisure. There is a portion of it observations made doing chores about the place, working in the garden, pottering about.

More of my hours out of doors have been spent on these Wissahickon Hills than anywhere else. I know the valley of the Creek from Schuylkill to the springhole near Montgomery Square that is its furthest source. I have walked the whole length of it several times, long stretches of it many times, and I have made more than a thousand and one excursions to this, that or the other place among its environing hills that were as necessary to me as the pilgrimages of a devotee to his chosen shrine. It has been at times the collecting instinct, strong in me from boyhood, that drove me hither and yon, for pink garnet, or for nest of blue-winged warbler, or for yellow ladyslipper. The buildings on the hills, too, have lured me, all of the many sorts of them, and all the changes that man has made on the landscape. I like stone farmhouse with sharply pitched roof, and mansion of colonial times, and Italianate villa, flat roofed, white-walled, early Victorian. I like many-storied grist mill, and barns Swiss and English, springhouse under the white arms of buttonball trees, and bridges, whether arches of

mica-schist, or wooden tunnels painted red, over the green waters of the creek. There is still here much to suggest the colonization and development of America. Even what is left of Rittenhousetown writes large a century and a half of our history.

I never tire of the beechwoods of the creek's lower stretches, fellows to woods that, in this northern zone of ours, are found in so many places round the world; of the close-ranked hemlocks, thinning sadly now; of the stands of tulip poplars, tall and straight growing; of terraced hillside of apples in bloom, and quarry hole white with cherry blow; of thorn-trees, thick growing and low, and red with berries after the leaves have fallen.

There have been many changes, of course, in this countryside, in the more than fifty years that I have known all these aspects of it,—changes for the worse, some of them. The fact that so much of both creek and hills above it is in our great city park has held the lower portions of the valley freer from change than most places hereabouts. The greatest changes on the lower stretches are those caused by the razing of roadhouses and the doing away with covered wooden bridges, with all of these latter, indeed, save one below Chestnut Hill.

There were wood-duck on Wissahickon when I was young. There were eagles passing over now and then, seven that I listed over a quarter century, but I have seen none now since 1906. Cold seasons have thrice cut off our Carolina wrens, but they manage to struggle back to their former numbers after a decade of kindlier winters. There are a few raccoons about, but their raids on the sweet corn of backyard gardens are not so usual as in the days of my youth. Opossums visit my hen roosts now and then, and the blue pigeon-hawk from the far north is with us all winter certain years and decimates my neighbor's ducks. There are mink and weazel and skunk about, but they are scarce. Foxes and deer, introduced, flourished for a time, but they are now gone. The deer were trapped and carried off, the foxes shot off for their raiding of hen-houses. Grey squirrels are so many as to be a pest, and cottontails hold their own. The kingfisher clatters about all

day, but the night-herons are less plenty at dusk. A heron slow flapping against the afterglow is not the feature of summer evenings it was in my youth. The carp have greatly reduced the fish there used to be in the creek, sucker and chub, fall fish and bass, sun fish and catfish. The bobwhites have come back of recent years, and an Asiatic pheasant adds a touch of color to our hills that they had not in old days.

The rarer flowers are now gone. It is years since I have found gentian between the creek's mouth and the old end of the park at the Reading Pike. Arbutus and partridgeberry, laurel and dogwood, mazzard cherry and tulip poplars are still here to delight us at the right times of the year, but the flowers are harder to protect from the many people who frequent the park than are the birds and the mice and other small deer.

In the old days, except for a few Roxborough folks and chance visitors, you knew to speak to, or by sight, nearly all the people you would meet driving or riding or walking here. Those days are no more. Only a few of the old stock are still faithful to the paths their feet followed in childhood. You are lucky if you meet anyone you know in a round of the hills now. Most of their old beauty is still about them, however, at whatever season of the year you visit them. Storm can quickly restore to them even now a tonic wildness, and moonlight make them as magical as ever they were to one and twenty. They are the surprise they have always been to strangers from far or near. A bluff of grey schist, hemlock covered, with kinglets tseeping through the plumy branches, is refreshing so close to a great city, and muskrat tracks in the mud by the creek are a sight to make the years fall off bent shoulders. The Wissahickon and its hills are a blessing to many thousands of us. They are here always, good to visit at all seasons, and just as good as a suggestion of all the far wooded places where men may find freedom and heartease.

I have strayed from home once in a while in these sketches. There are echoes of outings in the Berkshires and in New Hampshire. There are records of trips across the Delaware to the pine

barrens of New Jersey, and on to the sand-dunes and beaches of its sea-islands. Such trips were in old days a part of the lives of most of us who lived on our inland hills. Barnegat and Beach Haven and Cape May called us summer after summer for the two weeks' vacation that was all but all of our outing in my young years. In later years little journeyings in quest of this kind of bloom or that kind of bird took us for a day to Brown's Mills or Woodmansee or Chatsworth. In the book, though, as in the life out of which it has come, excursions have only a minor place. The hills of home have been my happiest hunting ground.

CORNELIUS WEYGANDT

Township Line & Peil's Lane . . .

THE WISSAHICKON HILLS

New Year's Day, 1930

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I

For S. W. HARRIS

these echoes from old times . . .

The WISSAHICKON HILLS

THEY are not very different, these Wissahickon Hills, from any group of the thousand hills each one of us knows. They crowd closer, maybe, than many hills, on either side the gorge their creek has cut through. They are more wooded than many, and wooded by nobler trees. They are more sought by men. It is in contours, mainly, and in fauna, and in proximity to a great city that they differ from their many fellows between Appalachians and sea. They are not more beautiful than hills by Saco or Contoocook, by Ashuelot or Deerfield, by Rondout or Raymondskill. The water of their little river is less clear than that of mountain streams; their woods have no such splendors as those of sugar-maple and birch; their halcyon days are few, a seven some fortunate spring, a baker's dozen, more surely, well on in fall.

And yet they are, these Wissahickon Hills, all that hills should be. They bring to the boy the little adventures he must have to thrive. They kindle the lad to the wonder without which youth is not youth. They give the man the peace he needs to restore him to zest in living. And then they are the hills I know best, my hills, the hills of home. I have tramped them ever since my legs were long enough and strong enough to carry me over them.

My first visits to the heart of them must have been the decorous walks by their creek's side on afternoons of Sundays, Sundays so long ago they were true Sabbaths. At any rate those are the first visits I can remember. Father took us then, marshalling us, cane in hand, with the gravity that was fitting to the adventure. There were

delights by the way, many of them, as well as the hills and their stream. There was an old fire engine in a crumbling shed, a locked shed with a clapboard off one corner. Through that opening you could see that the engine was of a thrilling red, and of the primitive sort that was man-pulled and hand-pumped.

There was a wooden Indian of weathered red way up the valley, at the very furthest distance my walking powers could compass. Standing high above the trees on an outcrop of mica-schist, he made "Indian Rock" a place as holy to me as any place can be to seven. That painted boarding was less life-like even than the gaudy figures of cigarstores, but it was a symbol of the romance out of which came the play of many hours; a play more pious to me then than any worship.

A rival to "Indian Rock" was a tank full of writhing pouts beside a tavern, whose sign "catfish and waffles" appealed to the appetite that bulked as large as playing Indian to my untender years. A black bear on a chain at this tavern often drew my vote for a walk down creek, if Father let us choose which way we should walk. Then I was influenced, too, by the boats nearby, moored side by side to the trodden bank on the dammed stretch of the Lower Wissahickon, just short of where its narrow valley opens into the larger Schuylkill. Those boats are there still, after forty years, or boats so like those square nosed and flat-bottomed craft that that reach of dead water under the willows seems to have known no change.

It was just here, in later years, I began to find life puzzling. Father was with me then too, and Mother, and Sister, the whole family, on an afternoon jog in the Germantown wagon. Two men drove toward us around the willowed bend. As their buggy passed abreast of us Father said: "That man next us is John Sleeper Clarke, Booth's brother-in-law. You remember him, Mother?" I had heard of him many times, of how droll he was on the stage, and I could not understand how a funny man could be so sad-faced. "Why, he don't look a bit jolly," I blurted out. "No," Father said, "and he is not jolly off the stage. They tell a story about his being

so melancholy he went to Dr. Weir Mitchell for advice. It wasn't a special appointment. Clarke just came in in his turn and asked Dr. Mitchell how he should get rid of the blues. Dr. Mitchell hadn't recognized him, and so he just said the usual things as he got ready to record the patient's business and daily life. 'You've heard of my rest cure,' the doctor said. 'Take that as far as you can, and do pleasant things whenever you have the chance. You might go down to the Walnut, too, and see Clarke. That would cheer anybody up.' It may be that the actor's face showed the hit, but Dr. Mitchell used to say he couldn't tell why it was it occurred to him just then that this Mr. Clarke might be the comedian. He knew it was when his patient said, 'Thank you, I'll call again, but I'm afraid I can't see Clarke,' and bowed himself out."

I did not understand the story wholly. Possibly twelve could not. But I was puzzled. I did not think of it often, however, in those years. The valley of the Wissahickon and its crowding hills were now chiefly hunting grounds to me. I had been schooled to an interest in birds in the years since I had first walked there with Father. Two brothers in whom there was little good but this interest had been my teachers. And not only birds, but flowers, too, became objects of the chase. Arbutus was scarce, tanagers' eggs were scarce—therefore both were desirable. Just when the beauty of either came to be part of the thrill that is still mine when I come on plant or nest, I cannot recall. It was part of the thrill, I believe, before I was conscious that it was part. Little savage though he be, the boy feels in himself the trouble and delight that beauty stirs in him long before he knows it is beauty is stirring him. Even when he is aware in some dim way that something else than unhealth or appetite or disappointment is at work in him he cannot express his mood. And when he realizes it fully enough to put it into words he will not. Once in a while, a very long while, something will force him to own that beauty moves him, or he will be caught off his guard and grow articulate.

One Sunday afternoon, on my way out from home, I escaped a gang of mill-boys, some of whom had tried to thrust sticks through

the wheels of my bicycle. Coming back the same way a few hours later I met one of them by the wayside. It was a quick rise and I was pushing my wheel. He was not one who had tried to throw me, and he did not look belligerent. As soon as I put eyes on him I looked about for the rest of the gang. They were around a fire a hundred yards back from the road, and intent on some game, mumblypeg, or poker, or crap, maybe. Still pushing my wheel I came up with him. A few feet beyond him I stopped to mount. I kept a careful eye on him, but he paid no attention to me. Incautious as it was, I spoke to him, "What are you doing?" I asked, thinking that perhaps he had done something that his crowd had punished by sending him off here. "Oh, just looken' off," he said, "I like looken' cross country." He had a queer look in his eyes that it took more years of living than I had then to know was dream. That boy was about fifteen.

Jimmy Kinsella was younger, not more than ten. I knew he cared for birds and that he would fight as hard as his lamed ankle would let him any boy who tried to take a nest Jimmy regarded as under his protection. I was hardly prepared, however, for what he said to me one night I was at his house for our wash. "Jimmy's found a nest he'd like to tell you about," his mother said. So far as I could make out from his description it was a good find, the nest of a worm-eating warbler, in some laurels undercarpeted with green moss. "It's an awful purty nest," said Jimmy, "but I don't think much of the way the bird sings, a good deal like a chipping sparrow." I asked him what bird he thought did sing best. "Larks," said Jimmy, "I think the meadow-lark's got the purtiest whistle of any bird." Had his father talked to the boy about the larks in the Antrim of his youth as the best singers among Irish birds? Was that why Jimmy thought larksong so good? That word whistle had the old-country ring. Or was it that Jimmy had felt it out for himself? Perhaps he had, for when I pressed him about others' songs he owned "the swampie's next best." The redwing's "fluted okalee" is undoubtedly akin to the lark's whistle.

The song of the wood-thrush was more to me at Jimmy's age

than that of either lark or redwing. That, perhaps, is another reason I so care for the hills of the Wissahickon, for nowhere else are there so many wood-thrushes. Nowhere in those hills are you out of hearing of that song, at the right time of the day and year. It is a song few Aprils bring me a first hearing unexpectedly. I so long for it that I go hunting it most springs. Your chance of hearing it early is better in the bottoms along the creek than on the bleak hills I live upon or in the high valley I cross on my way to the railroad and town. If I do not happen upon a wood-thrush singing by the twenty-eighth of April I am driven down to the creek by the hope of hearing one there. Generally he is there by the twenty-ninth of April, always by the second of May. And always, no matter what the weather, he is singing when he comes. He is the woodland bird in all this countryside as the robin is the bird of the open land. He is not, of course, known by everyone as the robin is known, and loved as the robin is, but he is known by all who know the woods. "Wood-robin" we call him here, and fortunately, for the familiar name gives him a place in the affections that "thrush" could never win. "Thrush" is used popularly, independently of a knowledge of birds got by books, of the brown-thrasher only, and even this restricted use is not country-wide. For all the efforts of the bird men, from Burroughs down, even "hermit-thrush" remains a name arbitrarily bestowed, a name without the roots in tradition a word must have to flourish.

The wood-robin's is the song for this countryside as surely as the hermit-thrush's is the song for more northern hills. The song of the wood-robin is deliberate, full, untroubled, heart-easing. The song of the hermit-thrush is uplifting, rhapsodic, rare, unsubstantial. Its music is a music northern, and sweet of the air; the music of the wood-robin is sweet of the woods of a richer, more southern land.

It was always a part of the ceremonial of walks with Father to stop to listen to the wood-robins. I can recall the very tones with which he said: "There he is on that low limb, with a spotted breast like a young robin's. That's how you tell him."

In those days, too, I was taught to love beeches and hemlocks. Father would call my attention to ranks of warm grey boles against the fallen leaves that made so perfect a background of yellow-brown on the quick-climbing hill. I cannot recall his phrases, if he had set ones, about the beeches. I cannot forget his likening, time and again, of the concave curves of drooping hemlock branches to the curves of the roofs of Japanese pagodas.

During the cubbish years I hunted the hills for small pelf and treasure, it was not often I thought of this teaching of their beauty. It came back insistently to me later, of course; and it, all the time, there in the back of my mind, made me remember pictures and incidents that had at the time of their impression too little interest to be consciously stored away.

In those days I brought home birds' eggs and flowers and talk of little wonders seen and experienced. Mother didn't like to hear of the great vines of chicken grapes we cut off close to the ground and swung out on from the high banks until we thought we were at least fifty feet in air. So I didn't talk much of such things. The hills were largely park preserves and the guards might take you up if they found you cutting a wild grape. Mother knew that, and she liked the grape vines. She feared falls, too. Nor did she like me to come home and report that a squirrel had stolen my tie of green and red plaid. That loss occurred when two of us chased the grey fellow into a red maple whose hollow did not allow him to climb more than three feet above the entrance to it where a branch had been torn off. We poked him with a stick, hoping he would run out and into the salt bag we held to the hole. He knew better than to do that. He just growled when we poked him, and sat tight. We liked the audible responses to our efforts, but we would rather have had him make a dash for it. I tied my necktie, tightly I thought, to the end of my poking stick, hoping he would become entangled in the tough silk and so be pulled down. He only growled, and that more subduedly, when I poked him with the wadded point. Then I began to twist the stick. That did not fetch him

either. I pulled the stick out again. It was without its green and red pennon.

It was above this very squirrel tree that I saw my first free eagle. With my chum of the season I was after I don't remember what in the thicket overgrown with grape of which that redmaple was outpost. The vines had half killed a great tulip-poplar that rose from the thicket. I suppose we must have been sitting very quiet, on the lookout for some beast or bird. I remember we were suddenly startled by a crashing of the rotten limbs of the poplar-top, and that looking up we saw the great bird trying to light there. He, perhaps, saw us just then, or, perhaps, the limbs were too weak for his weight. He threw himself off the tree-top and swept out over the creek and on past the green hemlocks and grey house below us.

It is not great birds, but the least of them, that have grown familiar with me here. One noon, as I sat on the creek's bank, where it was swollen and yellow with a February thaw, a winter-wren flew from under the bank just by me to a stake in mid-stream. I never thought for a moment it would stay on this unstable stake, buffeted as it was by the rushing flood. But it did stay there, and burst into that song of so surprising volume and length and sweetness. Only once since then I have heard the winter-wren sing in these hills, and that on a day when rain was falling, and freezing as it fell. Yet from such hearings that song has come to have for me a hardiness in it, a quality of sweetness out of adversity, that no hearings of it on days of full summer can dispel, for all its more natural setting by Bash Bish in the Berkshires or by slash side on Passaconoway.

Here, too, just under the Pipe Bridge on Wissahickon, as I stood still in softly falling snow one winter's eve, a kinglet dropped to the lapel of my coat, and clung there, and eyed me fearlessly for a moment, and lisped away to a hemlock close by. Once else only had I a sensation in any way like this. That was from a flying squirrel in April dusk. As I walked to the station something planed through the air so close to my face I straightened up involuntarily

to avoid it. That glide ended on a tree trunk but three feet away. I remember, as one chances to remember little things, the eye of that kinglet so near to mine and the eyes of that squirrel as it clung to the trunk, and quivered, and wondered at me there.

Little things other than these, a thousand and one of them, I remember. I remember how I tracked a rabbit snarer in the snow, and broke up, as I came on them at long intervals, each one of his half dozen traps, so carefully and workmanly made. They were those of a bent sapling and a noose spread over a little circle of twigs driven into the ground. They take time to make, and skill to set. There must have been an angry man made that same round in the grey of the next morning.

I remember how my chum's old harrier rolled over and over and dragged himself to shore half drowned when he was caught in a rapids in the stream. I remember reaching home from the hills after sundown in October, tired to death, but triumphant, with bran bag half full of black walnuts, gathered from frosting grass that chilled my fingers. How stained and smelly my hands were after hulling those nuts!

I remember the night herons we watched for each summer twilight, as they winged westward for night-fishing on the creek. And I remember how often I dawdled about on the lower pitch in Kitchen's Lane, hoping for a sight of the blue mink that Harry the lamplighter saw so often. I never saw it, but I did see the Muscovy ducks it killed at the bee farm, the first of those warty-faced fellows I ever saw.

These things are all from boyhood. Less concrete were the joys I had of the hills in youth. Then, of course, I was often more or less moonstruck. I know I was very angry when I told friends of walking here at night and of hearing a field sparrow sing out of the darkness, and could not get a response to my telling of it that was anything like my feeling in hearing it. Nor can I put that now so anyone feels it as I felt it. Somehow that song out of the dark seemed a wonder. I was reading Thoreau now, and out-of-doors grew significant to me in a new way. Its romance was one thing;

that sprung of girls another. I couldn't reconcile the two. I cared so much for the hills I wasn't content to have them become just a background for a girl. They were that, but they were infinitely good in themselves.

And so they are still, grey days or gold, white under a winter moon, or blue in the March morning. Like other hills, they change with the hours and the seasons, in color and texture, in feeling and suggestion. Consider them this fifteenth of November. The day broke grey as it has broken every dawn of this fortnight of Indian summer. This day, too, has been, sunrise to twilight, still and soft, as its predecessors all thirteen, with no wind or rain to drive away the grey that hung, the slow hours through, as haze about the near woodside and distant hills. In the shadows the grey deepened to blue, but elsewhere, shot through with sun, it thinned out diaphanously until it was like the faintest dust of ashes suspended in the air. There was balm this day for all alive, all day through, for great red wren that carolled it in at sunrise, for grass that greened in its noon, for plougher that turned up the mellow loam through its sundown hour.

There are grey days other than this. There are grey days when you can see for miles, grey days of hard light when even on the far horizon trees and barns stand out sharply, when all lines are definite and cold. There are grey days of falling snow. There are days when, after snow, great clouds heavy with snow yet to be, lie across the sky, windless days when the snow inch-deep on every limb makes a grey whiteness in the woods. There are grey mornings when the hoar frost has formed finger-thick on every twig. On such mornings, when the sun comes out, melting the frost, the woods become grey with haze as they do on days of melting snow, as grey as they were before sunup with the hoar frost. There are grey days, too, when rime covers the trees after an ice-storm.

There are gold days as well as grey on Wissahickon, days of fall, windless days when all the hours from dawn to afternoon are benign and mellow and full of a large content. On such days

the omnipresent poplars take on glory in the sunset. A clear yellow to the last leaf, they have drowsed all through morning and noon and early afternoon in a kind of half-dream. A breeze comes now from the glittering west, and all the poplars awake. Their leaves tremble as they catch the breeze. Their yellow brightens to quivering gold in the dazzling light.

It is no wonder Poe loved the tulip poplar best of all the valley's trees. It is a thing of beauty through all the seasons. In winter it is true, the tulip poplar may not rival white oak or chestnut. It does not have the ruggedness of trunk and strength of crooked branches stretching skyward of the one, or that suggestion of survival from an earlier age there was always about the other. But no other tree of these hills, save the beech, is, in summer, a real rival to the tulip poplar in beauty. The beech is not so wholly of this countryside. It reaches far to the north; the tulip-poplar, like the wood-robin, of a more southern range, expresses the very spirit of these hills. In May, with flowers studding it all over, flowers tulip-shaped, of pale green and paler orange and golden hearted, it has about it a dewy freshness such as has no other tree. The bees in their thousands are busy about it; its scent of so faint, yet honied sweetness, comes and goes on the air; its bannered leaves drink the glad light and hold it. The whole great pillar of greenery quivers with a tender fire of youth that is this tree's alone. Now it is sought by squirrels, who cut off the flowers for their honey, but drop many before they suck them dry. After the squirrels the small boy gleans, and climbs what trees he dares, too, to pluck and suck such untouched flowers as he can.

It is a tree to admire, too, of a bright morning of early winter, when the seed pods of its flowers stand out all over its outmost twig-tips, candelabra of light yellow against the sky's utter blue. And now, too, the squirrels are busy in it, harvesting the seeds, at greater risk, perhaps, on its high thin twig-tips, than is theirs in the gathering of any other grain.

There are old houses by Wissahickon, old houses of grey stone crumbling into decay under the great white arms of sycamores,

places to which the sentimentalist likes to fit stories of fallen fortunes. There are dank and dark places by Wissahickon, places of green gloom under hemlocks by water green with algae, places that to some imaginations cry aloud for a murder. Considered the year round, however, these hills and their creek are wholly tonic and wholesome. It is only by confining your thoughts to certain moods of certain places that you can find any suggestion in reality for such wild tales of these hills as are told by Lippard and his following.

It is easier to understand the hills' suggestion of Indian things. Their name is Indian; legends of Tedeyscung still linger among them; once in a while the frost heaves an arrowhead or stone hatchet out of their poor soil. To me in childhood, as I have said, the Indian was symbol of romance. The later years have lost me that symbol. I have heard, I admit, a Micmac talk so intensely as he saw again before him a cove with spruces just out of Yarmouth, or a road by St. John with a rabbit crossing it on a bias at four leaps, that I, too, have known with him the romance of those places. I have been stirred to a wonder beyond words by his recital of the burial rites of his chief, of the body sent alone to sea, viking-fashion, in his canoe, at sunset.

Such recapture of the romance of Indian things, though, has been mine but seldom. And I am glad of it when it comes about chiefly because it brings back to me a joy something like the joy I had in good hours of boyhood. Today there is very little charm of that kind for me in the Wissahickon Hills. The romance of out-of-doors they bring to me year in and year out, as I go about my chores at home, as I make little expeditions here and there among them on days off. I have almost as much pleasantness now from my memories of old days among them, as I have from each new pleasure they bring me. There are few little adventures for me now among them that are very different from those of the past. Generally I feel more keenly this that is now happening to me, at the moment I experience it, than I feel this one or that I remember.

And yet, I wonder. It is keenly enough I remember this little thing of thirty years ago:

Sparse cedars spindle up, dusty bronze, in a circular space walled round with high oaks, greyish white of trunk and of outreaching tops just breaking into leafage of grey green. Here I have come for showy orchids. As I catch a whiff of their scent, sweet and earthy, I hear talk and twigs snapping. Somebody else knows this place of treasure. I hurry forward, intent to find and snatch my spoil of flowers before the intruders can. As I kneel to pinch through the first found juicy stem I see two men fall on their knees not twenty feet away and begin to dig with their hands in the mould. Both chuckle defiantly at once, and each holds up a black fungus to the other. I chuckle, too, holding up the spike of white and purple blooms. All three are on our knees. Seeing I am no rival of theirs their chuckles take on a mollified tone and before I can speak they cry:

"Truffles."

"Orchis Spectabilis," I retort, pedantically.

"You can have 'em," answers one, "we're after truffles."

"My find 'll last longer," is all I can think to say.

"Maybe," says the other, "but it don't taste like these." He works his way on a little, on his knees, and unearths another truffle. The one who first spoke grows oratorical, still on his knees.

"These just melt away when you cook 'em. Put a half pound of butter in a pan, drop the truffles in when it's melted. They go together into the sweetest mess there is."

"Don't worry," I reply. "They're safe from me. I don't dare to eat any but field mushrooms."

"Field mushrooms! Good-bye."

That was his last word to me. He moved off south through the cedars, I north, down the bank of the little run, where I picked the rest of the dozen spikes I limited myself to. I heard him talking to his friend after he was out of sight. Since then I have hunted these hills a hundred times and more, but I have never came on either again, at least to recognize him. I wonder sometimes does

either remember this grotesque meeting of thirty years ago. I have yet to taste the "sweetest mess there is."

It is pleasant to remember a later tramp on the hills, on a morning of early April some four years ago. My boy and I made a round we often make, up Township Line and down to the Monastery and home across the Fifteen Acre Lot.

The sky that fronted us as we walked up the old road was leaden grey, brooding quietly enough above the northwest from which drove in a sharp, chilling wind. As we neared Kitchen's Lane I noticed the leaden sky grow liquid leaden, as if reflecting light from somewhere eastward above the clouds. By the time we reached the hollow beyond, a snow squall broke about us. It lasted perhaps fifteen minutes. As we left Township Line I had stopped a minute to look westward. The trunks of the trees of the sparse woods barred with dull olive bars the quick green of Livezey's fields, and above the fields, they barred, too, the liquid leaden sky. A meadowlark song loosened with piercing sweetness. Here and there on the field's green was a touch of peach-blossom, mauve in the curious light. Again the larksong loosened quickly, pierced us with its brief sweetness, and died away. I was happy again with the keen sweetness of youth and the spring. The child by my side felt happy, too, in his awakening way, and said, "Isn't it lovely, Dad!" We were just on the spot from which Jimmy Kinsella listened to "The purtiest whistle of any bird." Ecstasy flowed in on us as we pushed on through the saplings; the liquid leaden sky was blurred again with snow flakes; the keen air cut the cares of the world away, the lark's notes pierced again with their arrows of quivering sweetness. Never was heart hunger for wild beauty more fully appeased than in this moment. And when the moment was gone the content that succeeded was sharp and sweet, but none the less content. The little excitements of coming on pink-tipped arbutus against green moss; andromeda red against the purple mist of twigs; leaf-strewn brown slopes studded with bloodroot; the starting up of cardinals that bickered away; the finding of a crow's nest; the rising of a cloud of robins from a high pasture and

their drifting by us with little cries of contentment—none of these good things and the content I had in them made me for a minute unaware of the ecstasy that was kindled at the wood's edge, an ecstasy that stabbed with sweetness but left no sting.

This memory of the orchises is of thirty years ago; this memory of the snow squall and larksong of four. Or at least so I judge. I cannot be sure. Nor can I be sure I enjoy them recalling them now as much as I enjoyed a less unusual experience last night. For three nights before last night it was dark when I started home over the hills. Last night I was early enough for the afterglow. A bat fluttering by lifted my eyes to the west as I came down the lane toward home. He looked uncommonly large, as large as a sawwhet owl, in the dimming light. That is what I noticed first. Then I noticed beyond him the sky of rosy ash, a sky bossed with clouds lapping each other like cockleshells on a beach. Each shell greyed from rose in the centre to ash at the edges. And then I saw above the bat the trees, black-oaks in a row against the rose-ash west. As my eyes dwelt on their great branches, black and outstretching, the clouds lost their individuality and crowded close each on each into one great bossed west of soft rose-ash. That was better to me last night, that is better to me tonight, than the memory of a rarer happening of four years ago, or of thirty. The past was good, and it is only less good today, but the present is life and life is good to live.

1913

·THE LITTLE BROWN CREEPER·

IT IS rough weather, indeed, that drives the little brown creeper to cover. Go to the woods some November morning of sobbing rain and you will find him, and his mate with him, busily twisting their spiral courses up the great forest trees. Go to the woods some late afternoon of January when a northeaster is driving snow as sharp as sand through the close-ranked hemlocks, and you will find the inseparable pair, almost indistinguishable against the brown-purple tree-trunks, at their larvæ hunting. Go to the woods some midday of March when all their aisles are aglow with glad spring sun, and again you will come upon the diminutive twain, and, if you are lucky, you will hear him sing.

Once only have I had such fortune, the sixteenth of March, 1905, a fortune all the more rare in that the song came to me with all the joy of a surprise. I had not then known of the memorable paper of William Brewster that so well describes the song, that is the classic on the bird. It was on the west bank of the Wissahickon Creek, on the disused road that runs up through the Judas trees to Roxborough just above the old red bridge at Thomas's Mill Road, that I heard the song and traced it to its author. The sun, now high in the heavens, flooded the whole hillside, and warmed to song all the hosts of birds that were in the sparse trees, in the thickets, on the fences, and on the ground. Snowbird song, so continuous that it served as accompaniment to all other song, shivered up from all sides. Against it rose the murmured confidences of fox-sparrows not yet come to their full notes. One Carolina wren sang carelessly. Downy woodpeckers yaffled with an attempt at something more than their usual calls. A white-bellied nuthatch, nu-u-u-ing softly, almost attained to song.

I stood relaxed, only half-listening, all my senses drowsed into animal-like semi-consciousness in the warm comfort of sun and air. Suddenly a new note shot through the medley, and I was wide awake once more. It was a note tenderly sweet, but as distinct as though no other birds were singing. I had noticed two little brown creepers, but I should not, perhaps, have traced the new note to them, had a love chase not brought them near me after I had heard the new song several times repeated. There were notes uttered a-wing other than the usual tsissp, and then, as he alighted, half sideways, nuthatch fashion, on the trunk of a young tulip poplar near me, he whistled out his little song. "Té Tue, Tue, Té Zu Zu Zuh" I got it finally in my notebook, correcting my first version by his several repetitions. You thought of chickadee song as you listened, especially of the cadences of the drawling phoebe note, but you thought, too, of the warbling of the ruby-crowned kinglet, and there was a suggestion of nuthatch quality but of nuthatch quality mellowed into sweetness.

The song of the little brown creeper is one that you want to hear again, not because of its rarity, but because of its appealingness. It was in my mind later in the year, in the summer, whenever I passed into spruce swamp or pine woods in the Poconos, but I never heard the song there or saw the creeper there save in the fall migration. He remains to me a distinctive bird of our winter woods, generally to be found by himself, or with his mate, but occasionally consorting with a little bunch of golden-crowned kinglets. Twice, indeed, I have come on a single kinglet and a creeper hunting together, but the creeper seldom pays heed to any other bird. His trail and another's may cross, and he may travel with that bird and its fellows for a time, but it is, I think, only the accident of the hunt that brings him usually into the company of the other birds of our winter woods, with chickadee and winter-wren, with tree sparrow and crested tit, with downy woodpecker and white-bellied nuthatch. Of these the nuthatch is nearest the creeper in habits, so their paths cross often, even if they do not travel together for a while, as do creeper and kinglet. The golden-crown hunts some-

times as does the creeper, in the crannies of the bark of great trees, but more often he works over the limbs. If the trees are the hemlocks the golden-crown so loves, he will search out to the utmost ends of all the branches, from the head of the tree to the lowermost limb.

The creeper must be of larger appetite than the golden-crown, or slower at the chase, or more particular in his choice of morsels, for, late in the day, after the golden-crown has disappeared, and winter twilight has closed down on the woods, you may come on the creeper still searching up the trunks, led to look for him by his tsissps, when you can scarcely make him out in the gloom. Very early in the morning, too, the creeper is active, creeping in field mouse fashion, and almost at one with the bark, from the base of each tree he selects to high on its trunk. Thence he dives, giving you a glimpse of the white on his breast, to the foot of its fellow, which he works up to a like height, and then again dives to another, thus describing a series of very narrow and tall N's through the woods. Altogether the creeper is a most satisfactory little bird, both in habits and in the look of him, in his dapper brown and white. He almost never disappoints you in not being about in the woods when you look for him, whatever time it may be of his sojourn with us from October to April, or whatever time of day it may be, from dawn to dusk.

1907

·CATFISH AND WAFFLES·

"CATFISH and waffles" was in old times the proper meal to order at the roadhouses of the valley. It was the proper meal also at many hotels just without the park limits, where it could be washed down with bitters of one kind or another. It was the proper meal also at other hotels on other rivers than Wissahickon or Schuylkill within driving distance of Philadelphia. It was the meal, too, for special occasions in Philadelphia homes, humble or proud. "Catfish and waffles" was a rather modest title for a good deal of a dinner. It began with catfish and it ended with coffee, so it was sometimes known as "catfish and coffee," as a certain kind of "full course" dinner today is known as "soup and pie."

"Catfish and waffles" began with fried catfish and a relish. A steak of beef followed, with fried potatoes, generally a simple form of what we know now as "hashed brown." Then came stewed chicken and the waffles. And after the chicken and the waffles, the coffee. Dessert was served at some places, too, but not invariably. As a veteran of many bouts with "catfish and waffles" said to me, "You more often had 'catfish and waffles' with a wink than with a dessert. For my part I liked beer with 'catfish and waffles.' Catfish is a rich fish. It is fried in butter. That makes it richer. Good steak has streaks of fat through it, and there is butter in hashed-brown potatoes. Stewed chicken with gravy is rich too, even if the waffles sop up a good deal of the gravy. Coffee is not enough to settle such a dinner. You need a hoppy beer. I know those liked a sour wine, a Rhine wine or the like. The trouble with such was that it took too much of it, and it came high. You

wouldn't want whiskey after 'catfish and waffles.' Beer was the thing to settle it. It would do the trick."

All, however, do not agree with my oldster. "M. K. C." who writes *The Schuylkill: A Centennial Poem* (1875), holds for wine, and for chicken broiled instead of stewed. Says he of the inns at the Falls:

> Far-famed these inns through many a year
> For hospitality and cheer,
> For bill of fare peculiar here—
> Catfish, and coffee, beefsteak fine,
> Broiled chicken, waffles, and good wine.

My oldster had not tasted "catfish and waffles" for a quarter of a century, and he doubted if it were served anywhere any more. "There wasn't a hotel or a tavern or a restaurant anywhere you'd drive or boat out of Philadelphia didn't hang out that sign, 'catfish and waffles,' come March, and keep it hung until long about the fourth of July," he said. So, too, is my memory. He was wrong though, about the extinction of "catfish and waffles." Within a city block of the market stand where he cleaned catfish for me, they serve catfish five or six times every spring in a seafood cafe, and add waffles to it if you stand high in their favor, or if a group will order them for a little dinner. It happened my oldster didn't know of the catfish here because the restaurateurs bought of another fishman. At all the dealers I consulted about the present status of catfish I was told they never had any trouble selling the fish at forty-five or fifty cents a pound. The fish came in only five or six times every spring, some from Jersey, some from Delaware, some from North Carolina. "There are always old fellows," said a sprucely aproned young fishman, dropping an eyelid at me, "There are always *old* fellows who want catfish."

On my way home with my two pounds of Carolina catties, firm little fellows from nine to eleven inches long, I met a friend in the trolley car and told him of my prize. He was hardly an old fellow, but he bought catfish now and then, he told me, for old time's sake. He had netted them at night, in little streams, slow-

moving and deep for their breadth and muddy bottomed, in Butter Valley. "We had a waffle-iron in the house," he said, "an old one with a long handle, but we never made waffles in it. Nor was 'catfish and waffles' a dish you'd get in hotels in our part of Montgomery or Berks."

"Catfish and waffles," however, was a prized dish, as I have said, in many homes in and near Philadelphia when I was young. In homes the steak was generally left out, and the catfish served as a prelude to chicken and waffles. In clubs, too, you would meet "catfish and waffles." At both the famous fishing clubs on Schuylkill, "The State in Schuylkill" opposite Fairmount, and "Fort St. Davids" at the Falls, catfish stood high in the estimation of the members, epicures all. Their cooking was an art, and understood more perfectly by the amateurs of the clubs than by the recognized chefs of city restaurants. Says the historian of "The State in Schuylkill:"

"The fish are fried in the best butter of the market, to a brown color, and never shapelessly broken by turning; but in regularly laid rows and adhering to each other, and not to the pan, are dextrously tossed in the same compact form, with great ease, after a little practice, to the surprise and admiration of spectators."

These Schuylkill epicures distinguished between several varieties of catfish, but I shall not attempt to identify what variety they meant by this name or that. It is evident from the words I shall quote that they much prized "blue catfish." In speaking of what lines to use, the historian says: "The deep sea is used in deep water, merely as an extra line to be only occasionally observed, and is generally found to secure at ebb-tide, a quantity of fine blue catfish, esteemed most excellent, from the pure spring waters of the Schuylkill." One should perhaps add that this was written when the tide ran up to the Falls of Schuylkill, there being as yet no dam at Fairmount, and when there were no anthracite mines above Pottsville that ran colliery water into the river.

All this to-do over catfish is little likely to awaken sympathy

south of Mason and Dixon's line, where many people think of catfish only as poor folk's food. In New England, though, horned pout are spoken of almost reverentially. There gigging for them at night with torches on the bow of the punt was long esteemed a sport of sports. Catfish appealed to all sorts and conditions of men in the Philadelphia of yesterday. The people of the riverfront wards from Southwark to Kensington partook of them as eagerly as the epicures of the Schuylkill clubs. Staid Friends of Franklin and Marshall streets patronized the old woman who with a tray of *Ameiurus nebulosus* on her head cried "Catfish, catfish" up and down the street on days of early spring. South of Market Street, too, there were fish-wives, and luckily, at the same time, an itinerant vender of waffles. He was a French-speaking negro from the West Indies who served them light and crisp and brown. Fortunate were those who could meet a cattie-laden fish-wife and this master-baker on Dock Street, and carry home fish to be fried and waffles to be warmed, for the one meal.

At one of the Wissahickon roadhouses the proprietor went through the hocus pocus of netting catfish from a great tank full of fish, telling you that they were caught in the creek "only yesterday," and that he would kill and cook for you the fish you had just seen netted. He carried the fish into the kitchen, from which, I suppose he carried them back to the tank as soon as you were out of the way. There were, doubtless, catfish for all waiting fully fried by the time patrons were likely to drop in.

So famous did this hostelry make its "catfish and waffles" that they became the combination for wedding dinners and brought hundreds of brides and grooms here for that important function. I know of one couple, wedded in 1857, to whom the Wissahickon remained always a place of pure romance because of such a visit. It was not Niagara, to be sure, the Mecca of subsequent generations of lovers, but it was a place of wild beauty, after its quiet fashion. And it could be visited again and its old memories renewed of a Sabbath, or of a holiday, even if one could not get a day's vacation when one yearned for it, as in this more hurried and less busy time.

My couple of 1857 drove over by Nicetown Lane from their hometown on the Delaware to the Schuylkill, and up the Schuylkill to the Wissahickon, and up the Wissahickon to the hotel famous for "catfish and waffles." That was a drive by picturesque old villages, and by gracious country estates, and by the long-cultivated and villaed hills of the river, to the dark and romantic valley of Wissahickon. There was a feeling roused by that passing from sunlight into shade that is akin to the feeling that comes with the fall of night.

This netting of the catfish by the hotel man on the lower Wissahickon was a procedure a little out of the ordinary at that time, and it provoked the kind of talk that attracts all sorts of people to such a roadhouse as this was. It was not likely, at that day, that the folks who ate here would be so humanitarian as to object to the killing of the "poor little fish." Catties are not so attractive as the little quail a famous Nashville chef used to kill by a pinch of their heads, so he might cook them *à la Tennessee*, with all their blood still in the veins. To that, undoubtedly, many of the patrons of this hotel would have objected. However, "catfish and waffles" was no meal for the finicky, or for the squeamish. It was for good trenchermen, with hunger whetted by a long drive, by a row on the creek, and by at least five hours' abstention from food; or for a hunger edged by that best of all appetizers, youth.

1929

II

For RUSSELL K. ALSPACH and ARTHUR H. WILSON

researchers into Wissahickoniana . . .

The WISSAHICKON AND THE WORLD

"IT'S the best thing we have about Philadelphia, the Wissahickon," is a saying I have heard off and on all my life. Sometimes it is meant to be taken as the unqualified statement I have set down. More often it is meant that the Wissahickon, the creek and its wooded hills, its bold rock ledges and its aloofness from the clutter of civilization so close to it, is the best we have in the way of scenery in all our neighborhood, and that it is the surest agency of all our out-of-doors to bring heartease to men. And yet the fame of the Wissahickon, the stream in its gorge from Ridge Road to Reading Pike, and on through flat valley and low hills to its source in Montgomery County, is not heralded so widely as that of many Pennsylvania streams.

The Susquehanna has a place even in the poetry of Old England, because of Coleridge's "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" (1803) and of Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming* (1809). There was a book about it, too, in early times, *A Description of the River Susquehanna* of 1796, which describes the river itself as well as the resources and commercial advantages of the region it drains. There are many pictures of the Susquehanna, too, engravings on steel and transfer prints on china, from Northumberland south to Columbia. Woodcuts of the Camelsback Bridge at Harrisburg are common, and Danville and its bridge are represented in *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (1843) and other like books.

There are woodcuts and steel engravings and copperplates and

transfer printed china of scenes on Monongahela and Allegheny at Pittsburgh. They are woodcuts of the Water Gap, a Currier and Ives lithograph of the Delaware above Easton, and woodcuts of the bridges at Easton and New Hope and Trenton are found in old books. There are no American prints more widely distributed than those of Washington Crossing the Delaware, some of them from paintings more or less famous, before Sully's time, in Sully's time, and after Sully's time. The Juniata has not only its song, "The Blue Juniata," but old prints and a rare plate.

The Schuylkill is not so bewritten as many streams. There is, of course, the famous line of Tom Moore, "Alone by the Schuylkill a wanderer roved," but there is no other so outstanding reference. The Schuylkill is, however, the most frequently pictured of all Pennsylvania rivers, as often reproduced on plates alone as the Hudson itself. There are more reproductions, I think, of the waterworks at Fairmount than of any other set of buildings in America. I have transfer-printed plates in blue, and steel engravings, and copper prints, and lithographs, and woodcuts of these porticos and pleasantly portioned engine house. I have many prints, too, of country seats along the Schuylkill near Philadelphia, of the houses of the fishing clubs, of rafts of logs on the stream, of the canal at Manayunk, of the hills environing Valley Forge, and of Reading and its covered wooded bridge against a background of mountains.

The frequency of the reproductions of these places situated along the Schuylkill from the dam at Fairmount to the incoming of the Wissahickon is due, of course, to the early establishment by rich Philadelphians of country seats on the river hills. From pre-Revolutionary times, even, there were villas here set in the midst of plantations held highly ornamental in that old day. Much of the "boscage" and shrubbery of these places was of old world varieties.

The river itself and the roads that crossed it at the Upper Ferry Bridge and Mendenhall's Ferry and the Falls Bridge and the Flat Rock Bridge gave easy access to the estates that were con-

sidered show places. The slopes above the Schuylkill were regarded as the last word in landscape gardening when the Wissahickon was nothing but a wild and backward valley of mills and woodlots between Germantown and Roxborough.

Of lesser rivers the Brandywine is the most famous. Part of its celebrity is due, no doubt, to the battle fought by it in the Revolution. It, too, you find often in old prints, and, in one instance, on a plate of Gilpin's Mills, a plate as rare as the Juniata plate. There is no plate at all of the Wissahickon, and a paucity of old prints of it. You find the house in which David Rittenhouse was born, on a tributary of the Wissahickon and hardly more than a stone's throw from it, represented again and again in the illustrations of old books. There are prints, quite a few of them, of Glen Fern, the Livezey's house at the foot of Livezey's Lane on the Wissahickon. Croome did picnickers in a boat on Wissahickon to illustrate a story of Peterson's in *Graham's Magazine* of 1844. Sully has two Wissahickon pictures, and I am told there is a picture of the creek by one of the Peales, though I have never been able to come upon it. Thomas Moran did a half dozen sketches of it; and William T. Richards a series of water-views of its upper reaches and of Devil's Pool on Cresheim Creek, his best known Wissahickon picture being that hung at the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. There are, too, the brush drawings in black and white of Frederick Ehrlinger, and the prints from wood blocks of Herbert Pullinger. I have run across a sketch in a geology published in Edinburgh which shows certain rock formations near the mouth of the creek, but the artists on the whole have given the creek the go-by.

The rarest representation of the Wissahickon I know is a sampler done by Anne Wilson in 1840, when she was nine. It hangs, framed in mahogany, in the rooms of the Germantown Historical Society. Its rather much detail falls together very pleasantly if you look at it from a distance, and its red and green and faded blue harmonize now that they have lost their pristine hues. It is a scene of a bridge over Wissahickon, a bridge of two arches, in

red. The stream it spans is of a blue so faded it is only a little off white. A building, in red, abuts closely upon the bridge, as Robeson's Mill at Ridge Avenue did by the side of the creek. To the left, above the water, lombardy poplars in a row rise in green against a pale sky. A flight of steps comes down in front of the trees to the very edge of the stream. There is a man in a boat on the stream, towards the bottom of the sampler, and at the very bottom there is a low house, in red, on a spit of land that juts out into the stream. It is all crude enough, but it bears eloquent testimony to the concern there was over the creek in a nursery of ninety years ago.

Nor have the composers of music made much of the Wissahickon. There is no song to it, as there is to the Juniata, or Swanee, that has carried throughout the country. "The Gentle Wissahickon: A Ballad, words by Col. Jas. G. Wallace, Music by Herman Trevor" was a total surprise to me when it was waved in my face by the proprietor of an antique shop. It was published by Edmund L. Walker, 142 Chestnut St., in 1857. It is of the genre of "Ben Bolt" and "Listen to the Mocking-Bird." It recalls "happy childhood time" and "the picnic grove," and, in the end, "dear Alice Ray" became his "blushing bride." It is neither better nor worse than a Wissahickon polka that I know and most of the scores of verses inspired by the stream.

Our writers have tried harder, but hardly more successfully than our painters and composers, to give its deserts to the Wissahickon. There must have been poems in both Latin and German by members of "The Woman in the Wilderness," the Kelpius community of mystics in Roxborough. There are none such discoverable nowadays, however, anywhere in the neighborhood, or in the Ephrata archives. Franklin mentions the Wissahickon in his will as a source of Philadelphia's water supply in the years to come, but not as a place of beauty. Cobbett's reference to it of a fall morning, a discovery though it is, is not striking. The two sets of verse to the creek by Fanny Kemble are not more than so-so. Her description of the gorge's end just above the Ridge Road is better,

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and it is said to have brought about the awakening of Philadelphians and Roxboroughers and Germantowners to the real beauty of the stream. She had ridden out the Schuylkill to Manayunk and she was returning to Philadelphia by the Ridge Road when the valley of the Wissahickon halted her. The day was December 30, 1832. "The whole land was mellow with warm sunset, the sky soft, and bright, and golden, like a dream. I stopped for a long time opposite the Wissahickon Creek. The stone bridge, with its grey arch, mingled with the rough blocks of rock on which it rested, the sheet of foaming water falling like a curtain of gold over the dam among the dark stones below, on whose brown sides the ruddy sunlight and glittering water fell like splinters of light. The thick bright rich tufted cedars basking in the warm amber glow, the picturesque mill, the smooth open field, along whose side the river waters, after receiving this child of the mountains into their bosom, wound deep, and bright, and still, the whole radiant with the softest light I ever beheld, formed a most enchanting and serene subject of contemplation."

One knows, of course, that Wissahickon is no "child of the mountains," and one wonders if she did not mistake hemlocks for cedars, but the description is antedated by only two real appreciations of the valley. One of these is in *The Souvenir*, a Philadelphia magazine, in its issue of December 31, 1828. The other is to be found in Cobbett's *Rural Rides* (1830), but it was written for the *Register*, a paper of his of earlier years. There is a mention of the Wissahickon, it is true, in Dr. James Mease's *Picture of Philadelphia* in 1811, but it is only a footnote. It is almost at the end of his three hundred and fifty-eight pages that he mentions it, in his "Tours in the Vicinity of Philadelphia." In the last of the four routes outlined, "Northwestern Route," in describing an excursion along the Ridge Road, he mentions passing "Robeson's flour mills, on the Wissahiccon Creek near its confluence with the Schuylkill." He footnotes this as follows: "The scenery up this creek is very romantic, the creek passing in a serpentine course

among majestic hills, from the sides of which rocks in rude disorder impend over the stream."

This declaration that the Wissahickon is romantic marks an advance on Franklin's utilitarian attitude toward it, and on General Armstrong's shuddering reference in 1777 to having to leave a cannon in "the horrendous hills of the Wissahickon."

Cobbett wrote that, with the exception of a sunset in autumn on Long Island he had "never seen anything so beautiful as the foggy valley of the Wysihicken." It was on a November morning he saw it, and from a height whence he could look down upon it. Whether it was from the Ridge Road, or from School Lane, or from Rittenhouse Mill Road, or from the Township Line above Livezey's Lane that he saw it, I cannot determine. The description suits well the look of the valley from the last named road at a point directly east of Glen Fern. It is rather remarkable that Cobbett should have written with such enthusiasm of anything American, and particularly of landscape that boasted no specimen of his favorite tree, the Flowering Locust or Acacia. In his *Journal* for April, 1818, he writes of our birds and flowers. "But generally speaking, they are birds without song, and flowers without scent." That one so John Bullish and blind as he who could write this could at the same time appreciate the Wissahickon is a great compliment to the creek and its hills.

The article in *The Souvenir* is a romantic sketch entitled "The Pike-Hole." Before the day of Lippard it tells a Lippardian tale. The story is on two entirely different keys, one intended to be comic and one intended to be tragic. At the outset the writer describes the Wissahickon, and then "a miller's boy, one Hendrick Hutz, of Dutch parentage, who went by the distinctive appellation of Bully Hen." This boy is used, through his fear of a certain place on the creek, to prepare you for the terror there is in that place. Bully Hen will not pass up the creek by the pike-hole. The parents of the narrator of the story insist on their son visiting that place, and on the way to it they pick up Bully Hen as guide. He runs away in terror when the plank of a foot bridge gives way under

him. The parents, the boy, and his little sister, walk on upstream. They see some very fine grapes. The boy goes after them and falls through the tangled vine and some brush, grasping the grapevine only in time to save himself from falling into the dreaded pike-hole. On the water of this pike-hole, an artificial pond, is an old man in a skiff who providentially shoves his boat under the boy just as the boy can hold on to the grapevine no longer. The parents, the little girl and the boy then visit the old man's house. They are hurried thither by the old man's granddaughter, "a young and blooming female of about fifteen," who brings word that his old wolfhound Carlo is dying. You learn now that the old man wandering through the woods at night with his dog has given rise to stories of the devil issuing from the pike-hole, stories that made Bully Hen afraid of the place.

A reference in the sketch takes its author back to wanderings about the Wissahickon five and twenty years before, or in 1803. It was apparently even then a place of resort.

In an article of seven years later, in *The Southern Literary Messenger* for December, 1835, an anonymous contributor writes about "The Wissahiccon." He emphasizes the romantic quality of the creek and its hills. He thus describes its upper ranges: "The stream takes its rise from several springs in the upper part of Montgomery County, and flows, for a short distance, through a limestone country, remarkable for fertility and a high state of cultivation. Thence it passes, southwesternly, 'a sweet smiling stream sleeping on the greensward,' into more undulating land, until it reaches the Chestnut ridge, from which it progresses, at times indolently, and at times with an impetuous current, through a narrow valley, hedged in on either side by high hills, steep and craggy cliffs and precipitous mountains, until it strikes the Schuylkill, about a mile above the Falls."

This man knows dogwood, chestnut, locust, "the melancholy willow," the sumac, the gum, and "the gloomy hemlock." The man in *The Souvenir* knew oak and the "ruby ground-apple," but his botany ended about there. The man of *The Souvenir* calls the

first falls of the Wissahickon Robeson's Falls, doubtless after the Robeson's Mill that used to stand where is now the Reading Railway bridge just east of Ridge Avenue. The man of *The Southern Literary Messenger* speaks of "the oasis of the Wissahickon." I cannot make out whether this is the picnic ground west of Hermit Lane or whether it is the level place just above the great concrete bridge on the upper Wissahickon. He describes, it seems, the cutting back of Bluebell Hill that was to carry the Reading from Germantown to Roxborough. He also describes the Monastery and the Kelpius community. He speaks of Rittenhouse Mill. He also refers to Garsed's flax mill which, I think, must be Livezey's linseed oil mill at Livezey's Lane. This article reappears, signed B. Matthias, in *The Philadelphia Book or Specimens of Metropolitan Literature*, published in Philadelphia in 1836. Its inclusion here, with other "gems" by Philadelphia writers of that time would seem to indicate that the Wissahickon was recognized in Philadelphia, four years after Fanny Kemble's "discovery" of it, as an attraction whose fame should be published to the world.

During Poe's years in Philadelphia, 1839–1844, he often visited the Wissahickon. He advises those who would see the best of the creek to go out the Ridge Road to Roxborough, and, taking "the second lane beyond the sixth milestone, to follow this lane to its terminus." This route would bring him down to the creek almost opposite to the Monastery. It was just below here, on Mom Rinker's rock, he saw the elk, that he wrote about in "Morning on the Wissahiccon," in *The Opal* for 1844. Some have believed this elk was an apparition, of the same stuff as the Malay that DeQuincey saw below Grasmere, but it was, I think, an elk in the flesh, one of the animals that Friend Mason kept for the delectation of the patients in his sanitorium on Township Line. It is interesting to note that Poe spelled Wissahickon with two "c's" rather than "ck." "Its banks are generally, indeed almost universally, precipitous, and consist of high hills, clothed with noble shrubbery near the water, and crowned at a greater elevation, with some of the most magnificent forest trees in America, among which stands con-

spicuous the liriodendron tulipiferum. The immediate shores, however, are granite, sharply defined or moss-covered, against which the pellucid water lolls in its gentle flow, as the blue waves of the Mediterranean upon the steps of her palaces of marble. Occasionally in front of the cliffs, extends a small definite *plateau* of richly herbaged land, affording the most picturesque position for a cottage and garden which the richest imagination could conceive. The windings of the stream are many and abrupt, as is usually the case where banks are precipitous, and thus the impression conveyed to the voyager's eye, as he proceeds, is that of an endless succession of infinitely varied small lakes, or more properly speaking, tarns. The Wissahiccon, however, should be visited, not like 'fair Melrose,' by moonlight, or even in cloudy weather, but amid the brightest glare of a noonday sun; for the narrowness of the gorge through which it flows, the height of the hills on either hand, and the density of the foliage, conspire to produce a gloominess, if not absolute dreariness of effect which, unless relieved by a bright general light, detracts from the mere beauty of the scene."

That, of course, is no more than good hackwork. Both Cobbett and Fanny Kemble write with a surer eye for the object. Twenty-two years earlier the compiler of *Gordon's Gazetteer of the State of Pennsylvania* had put in exact information about the creek that the driven man might have reproduced. There are indications, indeed, that the author of *The Southern Literary Messenger* had read his Gordon. It is thus the *Gazetteer* records the creek: "Wissahickon creek, rises in Montgomery township, Montgomery county, and flows S.E. through Gwynnedd, Upper Dublin, and White Marsh townships into Philadelphia county; thence through Germantown and Roxbury townships into the river Schuylkill, about a mile above the Falls, and 5 from the city. This is a very rapid stream, upon which there are several valuable grist mills, cotton and other factories. It winds through a very romantic valley."

This is fairly exact, save that the creek flows through a corner of Whitpain township after it leaves Gwynedd and before it

reaches Upper Dublin. It was Whitpain's Creek, indeed, that it was first called, the name being so written down in Holme's map of 1681. Holme's map was printed in London, so it may well be that the creek was named only from the ownership of the land about its upper waters, and that the name was never in general use. The Whitpains held not only this land in what is now Montgomery County but land in the very heart of Philadelphia itself.

George Lippard was born in the very year in which the Wissahickon was so celebrated in *Gordon's Gazetteer*, the year eighteen twenty-two. In his short life, which ended in 1854, he wrote many stories which had the Wissahickon for background and which were concerned with legends he had created to harmonize with certain places that he loved along the creek or upon its hills. He carried his devotion to the Wissahickon to such length that he was married on a rock above its waters. He chose a moonlit night in May for the marriage, which was solemnized with what passed for an Indian ceremony. I have never been able to read any story of his through, and even the search through them for passages about the creek has been a dreary task. The name of the creek and descriptions of it, short and elaborated, come up recurrently in his writings like motives in music. In *Washington and his Generals: or Legends of the Revolution* (1847) he introduces the Wissahickon in season and out of season. In "The Battle of Germantown" the opening of one flight about it is after this fashion: "It is a poem of everlasting beauty—a dream of magnificence—the world-hidden, wood-embowered Wissahikon."

There are five hundred words of panegyric here. All of Book Second of the *Legends* is entitled "Wissahikon." The word was more instinct with romance for him without the "c." This book opens with what the Rev. C. Chauncey Burr, who introduces the whole volume at length, calls a prose-poem. This prose-poem is at three times the length of the earlier indulgence. At his most constrained Lippard writes of the Wissahickon:

"That name tells me of a tranquil stream, that flows from the fertile meadows of Whitemarsh, and then cleaves its way for eight

miles through rocks of eternal granite, now reflecting on its waves the dark grey walls and steep roof of some forest-hidden mill, now burying itself beneath the shadows of overhanging trees, and then comes laughing into the sun, like a maiden smiling at the danger that is past."

From the even tenor of such a description Lippard can rise to the empyrean with such a burst as this:

"A Prophetess, who with her cheek embrowned by the sun, and her dark hair—not gathered in clusters or curling in ringlets—falling straightly to her white shoulders, comes forth from her cavern of the woods, and speaks to us in a low soft tone, that awes and wins our hearts, and looks at us with eyes whose steady light and supernatural brightness bewilder our soul.

"Yes, whenever I hear the word—Wissahikon—I fancy its woods and waves, embodied in the form of an Indian Prophetess, of the far gone time."

Though Lippard could write thus of the Wissahickon there is no doubt at all but that he sincerely loved the stream and its woods. He insists on calling its hemlocks pines, but so do many people even in this time when tree-books are studied in the schools. He labored hard to invent legends that were worthy of its gloomy slack-waters. He fell back on mention of it and description of it and stories using it for background not only because he loved it, but because he had lived so little and travelled so little and dreamed so little that he had hardly any other material of romance. The mere mention of the word "Wissahickon" lifted him into a lyric ecstasy, and he imagined his references to it would similarly affect his readers. Or rather, poor, ill, tired, and with no other way of making his living than by writing, he did not know how else to appeal than by ringing the changes on Wissahickon, the word, and Wissahickon, the district, both of which seemed to him the symbols of all symbols to conjure up romance.

Charles J. Peterson is of another pattern, but getting through with him is as trying as getting through Lippard. "The Pic-nic: A Story of the Wissahickon," which you will find in *Graham's*

Magazine for October, 1844, has no more than local concern. Nor have the books of Henry Peterson, his cousin, *Faire-mount* (1874) in verse, and *Pemberton* (1873), in prose, any general appeal. There is still an antiquarian interest in both Petersons in Germantown, and there was some little interest in Henry as a writer when I was young. I was given his *Pemberton* as a prize in Sunday School for trying to learn the one hundred and seven questions and answers of the Presbyterian *Shorter Catechism*. I broke down, I remember, on question eighty-five, but inasmuch as I knew more of it than any other boy on the day of the ordeal, they gave me a second prize. The first they gave to a boy who at a later test recited the whole one hundred and seven. *Pemberton* was, I think, a very proper prize under the circumstances.

It is in "The Pic-nic: A Story of the Wissahickon" that Charles J. Peterson writes most particularly of the stream:

"Perhaps there are few rivers more romantic than the Wissahickon. The stream steals along at the foot of high, wooded hills, whose almost precipitous sides seem lost in the clouds. Here and there strips of level land intervene between the precipice and the water, and on one of these the pic-nic party had now assembled. Fair forms, chastely attired in white, were fluttering to and fro among the willows; here a pair, perhaps lovers, had wandered off arm in arm; there a group was embarking in a boat; some were fishing, others were strolling after flowers, and the enlivening music of Johnson's band, at this moment striking up, gave notice that the dance on the green sward was about to begin. The whole scene presented a gay and stirring picture. The groups sitting under the trees, the voyagers on the water, and the parties hurrying to the cotillion, filled up the foreground, while in the rear the wooded hill soared to the sky, crowned with a stately mansion on the extreme top, whose white walls glistened in the morning sun, like the fabled palaces of the genii."

Henry Peterson "dates" as surely as Charles. Though nearly of an age, the one is of the eighteen-forties, the other of the eighteen-seventies. Here is the late Victorian description: "Through a gap

in the trees they looked down on the valley of the Wissahickon. It was Indian Summer, and a bluish haze was spread like a softening veil over the whole landscape. The trees were still full of foliage —though here and there the bright and glowing crimsons had deepened into rich browns. All was singularly quiet, as with the weird quiet of a dream—save, at intervals, was heard the accordant sound of a distant flail on some barn threshing-floor."

The Wissahickon is recurrent in the writing of Thomas G. Gentry, but not so recurrent as in that of George Lippard. It was in "the small valleys among the hills of the romantic Wissahickon, where the piercing winds and drifting snows of winter do scarcely visit" that many robins and other birds usually migrants spend the months from November to March. Here, he tells us, there used to be in old summers many mocking-birds, but he in his time, found only occasionally "a mated pair." I have never once seen or heard a mocking-bird on these hills, but I know of authentic records of their presence here. Gentry believes winter-wrens and ruby-crowned kinglets and sawwhet owls nest here, and I do not, but it is his failure to write with his eye on the object that I quarrel with rather than his poor guesses at the nesting here of more northerly birds. His *Life-Histories of the Birds of Eastern Pennsylvania* (1876–77) is made up out of Audubon and Wilson and Nuttall as well as out of his own observations. He quotes them frankly time and again, but he does not bring them to the Wissahickon Hills. Yet all three of them must have known something of the neighborhood. Audubon crossed it at Chestnut Hill or at Robeson's Mill on his way to his home on the Perkiomen. Wilson is said to have been a suitor to a Miss Rittenhouse who lived close to the valley. And somewhere I have read or heard of Nuttall here digging up a plant with the end of the shotgun he had brought with him to shoot birds. Nuttall wrote his *Manual* from the angle of Boston after he had moved there to become curator of the Botanic Garden at Harvard. He never particularizes, as to places "near to Philadelphia," though he did as much field-work in Pennsylvania as in Massachusetts.

There is occasional reference to the Wissahickon by Dr. Weir Mitchell, though it fails to come into his stories as background as does the Schuylkill. There is mention of the creek in *Hugh Wynne* and *In War Time*, but no such detailed account of it as came to his lips as we walked with him one spring evening of 1904 on its hills from Drum Moir to Germantown. It was along the Township Line that we were following that Hugh Wynne rode when he went horsebacking from Philadelphia to Germantown and Chestnut Hill, Dr. Mitchell told us. In his own youth it was good soft going for saddle-horses, he said, out Township Line to Valley Green, and the walk to Devil's Pool was a favorite walk when you were visiting in Germantown or Chestnut Hill. He testified to the propriety of the Cresheim Valley as a place for picnics in the eighteen fifties. Evidently it was then a rival to the Log Cabin on the lower creek for outings of Philadelphians, being regarded, indeed, as more secluded and "exclusive."

It remained for a modern realist to write the best description in prose of the "romantic" Wissahickon. W. B. Trites, who grew up on its banks, calls the stream Perkiomen, and the town above it Cinnaminson, in *Barbara Gwynne* (1911), but the one is easily recognizable as the Wissahickon creek and the other as that part of Roxborough known as Wissahickon. Though the novelist has shaken the dust of the town from his feet, the creek remains a pleasant memory.

"It was the middle of October, a windless, silent day. The afternoon sun's light was soft and glittering. Dead leaves fell through the crystal air; they lay on the water's surface in a scarlet and gold mosaic.

"Barbara looked up from the beauty of her book, and the profound beauty of the day filled her with happiness. The stream at her feet, a pavement of scarlet and gold, curved down and away through slumbrous, glittering vales. Blue swirls of smoke rose from a hollow. The smell of smoke was in the air. In the distance, in a golden light, the little bent figures of old men raked dead leaves into heaps . . .

"The sun sank, a luminous pink dust filled the vales . . ." George Moore is a better master than Mrs. Radcliffe.

On the whole it is harder sledding through the verse than through the prose inspired by the Wissahickon. Yet there are exceptions, two of them by Quaker writers. In a letter to Joseph Galloway in 1765 Thomas Livezey is pleasantly revealed. Old Joseph had compared the lowness of Livezey's house at Glen Fern to "the infernal abode." The genial miller replied:

Near Wissahickon's mossy banks, where purling fountains glide
Beneath the Spruce's shady boughs and Laurel's blooming pride,
Where little fishes sport and play, diverting to the sight,
Whilst all the warbling winged race, afford my ear delight;
Here are evergreens by Nature set, on which those warblers sing,
And flowery aromatic Groves form an eternal spring;
Refreshing breezes round me move, which with the blossoms play,
And balmy odors on their wings through all my vale convey.

There is good banter in what follows, but I must content myself with this share of the verses that shows there was an appreciation of wild nature in English literature before Mrs. Radcliffe, and that appreciation in so remote and provincial a place as a miller's home on Wissahickon in Pennsylvania.

The other Quaker is Whittier, who, during his sojourn in Philadelphia, got to know the creek well. He brings back to us scenes from the past of these hills in his *Pennsylvania Pilgrim* (1872). One is of cattle coming home at evening, a scene that never fails to move the heart, because, perhaps, of some ancestral memory from the times when our race were a pastoral people.

The oxen from their ploughs
Rested at last, and from their long day's browse
Came the dun files of Krisheim's home-bound cows.

Time was, and not in the earliest of our years on Township Line, when the coming home of cows at evening was a daily experience of ours. It was a picturesque scene, the straggling line of the herd of thirty under the great trees by the roadside, the ranging of a quick-eyed collie that liked to think he was helping with the beasts,

the slow and slumping progress of the tired youth who had hours of milking ahead of him even when he had the creatures safely stabled.

Whittier saw in his mind's eye the Pietists of "The Woman in the Wilderness" seeking out Pastorius in Germantown, Kelpius most clearly of them all:

> painful Kelpius from his hermit den
> By Wissahickon, maddest of good men . . .
>
> Deep in the woods, where the small river slid
> Snake-like in shade, the Helmstadt Mystic hid,
> Weird as a wizard, over arts forbid,
>
> Reading the books of Daniel and of John,
> And Behmen's *Morning-Redness*, through the Stone
> Of Wisdom, vouchsafed to his eyes alone.

Whittier had lived in Philadelphia long enough to know well our countryside and our climate. He catches the "feel" of it in *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim:*

> caressing air, the brooding love
> Of tenderer skies than German land knew of,
> Green calm below, blue quietness above,
> Still flow of water, deep repose of wood.

This has the very atmosphere of our woods in late spring. He is as true in detail:

> The blossomed flax, the tulip trees in bloom
> Down the long street, the beauty and perfume
> Of apple-boughs, the mingling light and gloom
>
> Of Summerhausen's woodlands.

That is a bit of May. This that follows a bit of September, apropos of grapes:

> Great clusters ripened in a warmer sun
> Than that which by the Rhine stream shines upon
> The purpling hillsides with low vines o'errun.

That the Wissahickon was not widely famed in the eighteenth century was due in part to the lack of appreciation of wild nature that persisted until the writing of Scott and Wordsworth had had time to sink into the consciousness of America. It was these two, the one needing no middleman, and the other most enthusiastically interpreted by Henry Reed, who taught cultivated people in America to care for the beauty of back country places. There was no doubt but that the Wissahickon was regarded as such an out-of-the-world place. It was there you found visionaries in the eighteenth century, such as Kelpius and his kind; it was there you went to have corn ground and wheat and linseed. It was there you went to hunt. Even to this day all that the hoi polloi, with few exceptions, care for in wild places is sport, adventure, the joy of living dangerously. Men in the White Mountains who have spent their days in the shadow of the peaks have never climbed them to the top, and only so far up their sides as the pursuit of deer and bear took them. So, too, it was with most of the folk, no doubt, of Roxborough and Germantown. They visited the Wissahickon mills for what those mills ground for them or fashioned for them. They visited the streamside to fish for catfish or trout. They visited the woods above the creek to shoot wild turkey or to trap raccoons.

The only roads of the valley in early times were those across it, from Roxborough and Germantown down to the mills. Rittenhouse Lane ran from Germantown to the Rittenhouse Paper Mill and on across the shoulder of the hill just west of Rittenhousetown to follow the east side of the creek for only a few rods before it crossed on the dam breast just below the first stone bridge on the Upper Wissahickon. From Holgate's Fulling Mill, for which the creek was here dammed, the road ran up to Roxborough as Rittenhouse Lane or Schur's Lane. This was a more direct, if hillier, route to Roxborough from Germantown than that by way of Ridge Road and School House Lane.

The Rittenhouse Paper Mill, which after service in other manufactures was torn down in 1883, was the first paper mill in America. It is mentioned before 1700 in *A Short Description of Pennsilvania,*

naïve verse by Richard Frame. His laconic "A Paper Mill near German-Town doth stand" locates the mill, and the "Printed and Sold by William Bradford in Philadelphia 1692" at the foot of the title-page gives the poem's publisher and bookseller and date.

Gorgas Lane and Milner's Mill Road were the old names for the road down to the Monastery from Germantown. Now it is Kitchen's Lane. The Monastery was reached by a road from Roxborough, too, Conrad's Lane. These two roads made another link between the two towns, as well as ways to Gorgas's Mill, or as it was later, Milner's Mill. Later still it was, of course, Kitchen's Mill. Heft's Mill at Allen's Lane and the Wissahickon was reached by Allen's Lane from Germantown and by Levering's Lane from Roxborough. There was a road a quarter of a mile long by the creekside from Allen's Lane up to Gorgas Lane to Roxborough. Gorgas Lane came down a little valley past Healy's Dye Works and the Gorgas mills just back from the Wissahickon.

Livezey's Linseed Oil and Grist Mill was reached by roads from upper Germantown and Roxborough, both called originally Livezey's Lane from pike to creek, and creek to pike. It wasn't until almost the time of the Revolution the road from Germantown Road west to Township Line was called Allen's Lane. The Township Line ran past Allen's Lane and on down into the Cresheim Valley, to Dixon's Mill, the burrstones and part of the walls of which were still in evidence, in my boyhood days, by the roadside where it crosses the creek. Township Line ran on to the County Bridge above Valley Green. It crossed by this bridge and followed the creek for the short distance that intervened before it, now called Paper Mill Lane, began to climb toward Manatawna. Paper Mill Lane was, on some maps, still called Township Line north of the Wissahickon. Kerper's Lane, or Parvin's Lane, joined Township Line just north of Cresheim Creek. It did not cross Township Line. It was abandoned by Civil War days. In Nicholas Scull's Map of 1751, you find neither Kerper's Lane nor Springfield Avenue nor Hartwell Avenue. Nor is Rex Avenue on the

oldest maps. It was probably developed to give access from Chestnut Hill to Indian Rock Hotel, a famous resort until the eighteen-eighties.

There must have been a Weiss' Mill somewhere near the place where Megargee's Paper Mill stood later, for it is just below here that Weiss' Mill Road reaches the Wissahickon from Roxborough. Since it is Thomas' Mill Road that runs from Manatawna down to the site of Megargee's upper paper mill there must have been once a Thomas who milled here. On the oldest maps the mill is marked Barge's Mill. And Thorp's Lane was once Bell's Mill Road and before that Widow Paul's Mill Road. There is, indeed, a little building on Scull's Map of 1751 and on Christian Lehman's, which copied Scull's, marked Widow Paul's Mill. Dewees' Paper Mill was where the Reading Pike crosses the Wissahickon.

Charles S. Keyser in his *Fairmount Park* (1871) tells us that "until 1826 the Wissahickon was inaccessible except by byroads and lanes. At the Ridge Road a mass of rock stood on one side and a precipice on the other. During that year the rock was removed, and the present road begun." And yet in *The Stranger's Guide to Philadelphia* (1828) the road is not shown. Perhaps the map, which is not dated, is older than the book. Descriptive articles and stories of the early thirties tell us that the road was open through to Rittenhousetown a few years later. In Sidney's Map of 1847 the road turns with the creek and follows it up to the Red Bridge on the Upper Wissahickon. In *The Stranger's Guide* of 1860 the road follows the creek on up the valley. The road is here labelled "New Turnpike," but it was not so very new in 1860. From the map, which like so many maps, is undated, it would appear that the map's publication followed close on the incorporation of Germantown and Roxborough with the city, which was in 1854. I have seen the statement made that the road up the valley from the Red Bridge was begun in 1849, but that it was not open all through to the Reading Pike until 1856. A road had apparently been run down the valley from Dewees' Mill to Livezey's Mill at an earlier date. What is certain is that the Road all the way from Ridge

Avenue up the Creek to Chestnut Hill and on to Flourtown was, when first completed, a toll road, and that it ceased to be that only when taken over by Fairmount Park in 1867.

One of the charms of the Wissahickon is that you can get to know the whole length of the stream, the nineteen miles of its course from springhead to Schuylkill, and the hundred miles the courses of its score of tributaries approximately total. There is a sharp distinction in character between the lower eight miles from Schuylkill to Reading Pike above Chestnut Hill and the upper eleven miles. The lower Wissahickon is wild gorge, to be preserved in perpetuity as public park for the people of Philadelphia and its environs. Above the Reading Pike there are wild places, steep hanging woods with drooping hemlocks, tangles of thorn trees in the bottoms, and abandoned iron pits and marble quarries that make cover for one kind of game or another. On the whole, however, these upper eleven miles of the creek run through gently rolling country, that was real farm country until yesterday, but that is now rapidly disappearing as such under the advance of suburbia.

The woodland about the lower reaches of the stream is seldom more than a half mile wide, but it holds its original characteristics in large degree, with people on the whole respecting the regulations that preserve its fauna and flora. You cannot get to know well this part of the Wissahickon, the part in Fairmount Park, over a week end, though in that time you can learn enough of it to remember forever. A year's explorations of Saturdays and Sundays will take you to all its recesses, though it requires a lifetime to note all the changing effects of the seasons and the times of day and night upon its woods and waters. A woman who went to live in the very heart of its woods, down Livezey Lane, when she was a girl, says that each day she lived there revealed something new to her. She came from the city to this bowl of its hills in May, when the laurel was in full bloom, and she luxuriated day after day in all the changing aspects of her surroundings. She remembers great bunches of arbutus she gathered; the raccoon that greeted

her in the henhouse when she went to gather the eggs; the strings of eels and catfish her brothers brought in from night fishing; the heroic walks of three miles to church in all weathers; the clock that carried its toll of the hours from the busy town to this remote coign of the hills.

So, too, the upper waters of the stream appeal to those who live by them. An old gentleman, who owned old mills long since shut down, kept them in the best of repair, delighting in their tall silhouettes against the west. He stole away to his country-house here as soon as there was a springlight in the skies at sunset, and troubled his gardeners by anxious inquiries as to when the vegetables would be planted. He waxed lyric on the Sumneytown Pike, liking its good roadbed, its narrowness, its closeness to Wissahickon above Fort Washington, its many rises and drops at hills and valleys, its quick turns and the surprises of vista and far view that opened so suddenly before you. It was years, in those old pre-motor days, before he drove to Sumneytown itself, Sumneytown, by Perkiomen, where old arts and old crafts and old cultivation were preserved longer than in most places of our restless America.

The character of the creek changes, as I have said, once you are across the Reading Pike. There had been nothing like the smooth lawns and playgrounds of the girls of St. Joseph's College anywhere on its lower waters. Just above St. Joseph's it was all country in my youth. The fields just north of the road to Flourtown were tussocked then, and reeded, and cattailed, the haunts of redwing blackbird and killdeers and snipe. It was good fun following the Wissahickon through places from which you could see out, from which you could catch glimpses of Barren Hill and Militia Hill and Fort Hill and Camp Hill, old ridges associated with the movements of troops and the engagements about Philadelphia of the Revolutionary War. It was good fun to see the race horses of Erdenheim at pasture; and to wonder if Flora Temple was one of them. The stone bridge on the Lancasterville Road cast shadows in which suckers were wont to lurk and to resist all our wiles to lure them out. The great four storied grist mill was still

in operation on the road to Fort Washington. Here we always saw barnswallows for the first time in spring, for it was sheltered here, out of the wind, and good harborage for insects. Lime was still burned in kilns just above the creek.

There are few save local antiquarians who have written of these more placid upper reaches of Wissahickon. The creek flows by mill-site after mill-site here, and by dams gone out that once caused neighborhood feuds and litigation over water rights.

Above the creek at Fort Washington were houses that knew a life almost manorial in old times, the Wentz house on the Bethlehem Pike, far back from the road and approached by a lane of maples, and the Sheaf (Morris) house back from the Skippack Pike about a mile from Fort Washington, with great oriel window and high stables and orangeries. More characteristic of the country, though, are the many stone farmhouses, some of micaschist, some of limestone, some of white sandstone, and those about the headwaters of the creek, of red sandstone. The hills above the Wissahickon in its gorge are of poor soil, lean soil, hungry soil. Out of it you get no more than you put into it, despite the fact it has known leaf fall and the making of leaf-mould century on century. Here, in Whitemarsh, is limestone valley land, rich, not quickly exhausted, and holding moisture well through even long periods of drought.

All through the basin of the upper Wissahickon are pleasant villages, some on hills and some in hollows. Barren Hill, between Wissahickon and Schuylkill, with its old inn, martin-haunted, and its view of the mountains about Reading; Lancasterville, where a stage was once held up by highwaymen, in the gap of the hills; Broadaxe, the furthest point to which we drove our team from Germantown; Whitemarsh and its old mills; Fort Washington, where Sandy Run pours its spring water into Wissahickon; Fitzwatertown and its limekilns; Jarrettown, where hayracks were so long made; Springhouse and its water meadows; Gwynned Valley and Trewerryn Run; Gwynedd Meeting and the great oaks of its graveyard; North Wales with its nearby railroad tunnel; the

cluster of old buildings of red sandstone at Montgomery Square—what pleasant memories the mere cataloguing of the places brings to mind.

Just which of the springs in Montgomery Township, Montgomery County, is rightly regarded as the source of Wissahickon is a matter of controversy in Montgomery Square and Montgomeryville. The latter place claims the source on what is now the Connolly Farm, but there are those in Montgomery Square who claim a spring in a woods westward of the Bethlehem Pike and midway between Montgomery Square and Montgomeryville as its true source. Said an oldster of Montgomery Square to me, "It may be that spring toward Montgomeryville is a quarter mile further up than our spring over here, but it is too mean a spring to be the source of Wissahickon. It doesn't come up with half the water of our spring. Our spring in the woods never fails. It runs hard even in times of drought. It's a pretty spring to look at, flowing up out of the sand. It's as cold as you want to drink water on the hottest day of summer."

The last time I visited this headwater of the Wissahickon was a day of mid-April. It was a grey day, a day of low clouds and flurries of rain. The plums were in full blow, hardly ever more than one to a farmhouse. The apricots, the three of them I saw in Montgomery township were, too, in full blow, and a few cherries and pears were just breaking into bloom. The willows along every one of the many little streams that join to make the Wissahickon were mists of green. There had been but little rain for weeks and weeks but the three little runs on the McCrone and Knapp farms that challenge one another as headwaters were all running freely.

The spring that heads the uppermost one breaks out under a hickory tree, a very shelly shellbark. Nearby was the largest bed of dogtooth violets I ever saw in full bloom, a bed ten feet by thirty feet as thick-set with yellow-belled flowers as was ever any group of forsythia bushes. The woods about are thin but there are enough trees to make proper cover for the spring. It is a more picturesque spot, with the water running out over the broken bits

of red sandstone, than the spring further north that Montgomeryville claims as the spot where the Wissahickon rises. Montgomeryville has the honor of being the place where Solliday made his famous high case clocks. That is enough honor for it. It would be gracious of Montgomeryville to agree that the Wissahickon comes into being near Montgomery Square.

These up-country places by Wissahickon I have long known, but they have always been places for excursions, not the hills of home. Since automobiles have come in it is easy to visit them, and I do visit them as often nowadays as any region along Wissahickon save that in which I live. I have memories of Wissahickon beyond Whitemarsh that are a joy to recall. In this house I bought a gaudy Dutch teapot; by this creek I happened on a narrow strip of wild plums in full lushness of bloom, their clouded white flowers releasing faint fragrance on the wind; by this marsh the sharp cries of peepers pierced the frosty air; on this white road the soft-paced car just missed a scurrying ground-hog. In these upper parts of Montgomery County, places still half country, "the earth and every common sight" still wear for me "the glory and the freshness of a dream." There has "passed away no glory from the earth" for me in any of the unchanged country places. And, fortunately, man can do little to change the lower Wissahickon. It has still its storied past. It speaks less eloquently of human habitation now than in old days before the mills and miller's houses were torn down. It is losing that suggestion of yesterday given it by covered wooden bridges and mill-dams and mill-races. What nature gave it, however, it in large measure retains. And it has not lost its power of taking on new aspects. The Wissahickon Valley is not only a place of a thousand memories, but a place for new revelations of beauty of landscape. I who have lived on its hills more than fifty years have by no means exhausted their possibilities for surprise and for the awakening of wonder. And I have not yet passed the point at which new associations with the hills cease to establish themselves as part of me. Three fish-hawks in white and black circling over green water and dark green hem-

locks below the great bridge to Roxborough; the shining body of the *Los Angeles* in full moonlight passing above the great oaks of our lane; the hard light of a mid-March afternoon dispersing the color of red-maple buds into a cloud of thin redness; an aurora filling all the skies with green quivering light have brought me fresh impressions in my later years. Tomorrow I may see birds here I never saw before, or arctic snowbirds again; and some day I may find gentian again or a lucky penny. And dawn and sunset, dewfall and the fall of night, moonrise and the stars are never twice the same. These hills, I know, will have freshness and charm for me all the days of my life.

1929

·THE ROBIN·

THERE has been scarcely a month of my life that robins have not been about the place where I have lived. Some years I have not seen one for two months of mid-winter, and one summer a two months' trip to the British Isles made it impossible for me to rejoice, for that while, in their cheery goings and comings. All other months of all other years, save the two of December and January, there have been robins about. And always, even from Christmas to Valentine's Day, there has been at least one robin by some cedared spring-hole in the valley of Wissahickon, or in some sheltered copse on the hills above the creek that I pass over on my way to the station. Only yesterday I met a portly fellow, apparently in the best of health and spirits, running along in the shelter of the box hedges of Thomas'. It was balmy yesterday, the fifteenth of December, with the thermometer at sixty; but only two days beyond a fortnight ago it was six by that same thermometer.

It is the continual presence of the bird, his ubiquitousness, his insistent friendliness, his bright breast and glad calls, his vigor and bounce, that make him best known of all birds to his countrymen. These attributes, and the chance that his breast is of the color of the European robin's, the bird of all birds most mentioned in nursery rhyme and omen and folk-tale. The robin is not everywhere the trustful and neighborly bird of our Germantown lawns. In New Hampshire, where he is scarce, with only a pair of birds to every hundred-acred farm, he will not hop after you as you hoe the garden or mow the lawn. In California, he is as much a bird of the unfrequented forests of Feather River Canyon, as of the

live-oaks of Berkeley, which men in their hundreds pass and repass all day.

Everywhere, however, the robin sings in the rain, everywhere he is incurably cheerful, weather-defying, bringing with his voice and ways peace and good will to men. No wonder the immigrant to the New World was warmed to the heart at sight of him, and called him by the name of the loved window-haunting bird of the Old World. Was not our thrush, though many times larger, at one, in his friendliness and familiar habits and red breast, with the valiant little fellow the immigrants had known in childhood. No bird was so cherished and so famed and so far-heralded as cock-robin. So the regard for the lesser bird was transferred to his larger fellow here, and associations traditional with the one became traditional with the other.

The American robin was himself, however, a bird to win anyone who cared at all for the lesser creatures. The robin nested close about the first log-houses of the settlers, sometimes on the logs of the house itself where they crossed at the corners and extended beyond the wall line of the house. Nor did the robin desert the early houses when they were clapboarded, but built in the vines that the settlers planted about their sides. The robin stuck to the houses when stone succeeded logs as their material, not only for the protection that was his where people were going and coming at all hours, but because there was shelter from bad weather against house-walls and under the eaves.

The robin comes to us from mid-February to early March, when there are no leaves on the deciduous trees, and often builds and lays a first clutch of eggs before even the willows and crab-apples begin to leaf. There has been no year, I think, since I was a child, that I have not looked into the nest of mud and grass and delighted in the four eggs of so appealing blue clustered together in its bottom. As a child I had to climb pear-tree or apple-tree, Norway spruce or maple, to see the robin's eggs, but where I have lived these past thirty years there are generally nests in the ivy

or trumpet vine or Virginia creeper on the lattices, nests into which you can look from some second or third-story window.

"Robin's-egg blue" these eggs are, and more people know the color from its original than so know any other color, I think, save sky blue and cherry red and grass green and earth brown. Certainly there is no other color the name of which is derived from a bird's egg, a wild bird's egg, in anything like universal use. People do say, "white as a pigeon's egg," and "speckled like a turkey's egg," but "red as a wren's egg" is the only other phrase of such association with the eggs of wild birds that has any currency at all, and it has a currency much less than that of "robin's-egg blue."

We are aware of more tragedies in the nesting of robins than in the nesting of any other birds because the robins build so frequently about our dooryards, and in so conspicuous situations. Crows and jays, red squirrels and even grey squirrels, rats and snakes, will take the robins' eggs, often tumbling them out of the nests in their carelessness. What accounts for the occasional presence of a robin's egg on the ground, unharmed, I am not sure. Perhaps the egg must be laid, sometimes, before the nest is ready, or after a nest has been destroyed and the full clutch not yet laid.

Despite all enemies, and despite accidents through storm, the robins increase and multiply and replenish the land. The robin chorus of spring mornings is as loud and pervasive, and as general all over our Wissahickon Hills as it was in my youth. I sometimes think the robin population reached its highest figures in the early years of the century, before the great increase of starlings, and that there is not such a multitude of robins as there was twenty-five years ago. Yet there are still more robins singing in the grey light of dawn in April and May and June than you can count. And if you move from where you are listening to a point a quarter of a mile away you can hear as many there, too, as you could from your first listening station. The robins sing on into the summer, well into August, though with diminishing intensity and prevalence.

There is bird song, I must own, that is more beautiful than

robin song, but there is no bird song I care for more. Robin song is so inextricably interwoven with all the intimate associations of my life from childhood to the threshold of old age that I never hear it unmoved. The robins have, too, such a range of cries. There are scolding notes, and alarm notes, and battle cries; and the glad calls, the goodnight legatos they utter of evenings as they mount to the tree-tops before leaving for the roosts. In the roosts the birds gather in great numbers all season through, both cocks and hens before the nest is built, and young and old after the nesting season. For most of the years of my life the robins of our neighborhood sought the Awbury roost on Haines Street east of Chew. Now, however, some of them fly northward of evenings. Always robins have flown northward of evenings in the fifty years I have been watching birds, but never, until a few years ago, the birds of our immediate vicinity on the Wissahickon Hills.

It is the picture of the robin on the lawn that is most persistent in memory, of the bird running rapidly, stopping suddenly, listening intently with head to one side, for the slight crepitation the earthworm makes as he rings his way up through his burrow to the surface. How well we all know the swift stab of the bill, the bracing of the bird as he throws his weight backward, and strains with all his muscle, but oh! so steadily, to pull the worm from its hole without tearing it in two. The beating to death of the captured prey, and its swallowing; or the beating to a pulp and swallowing, and the regurgitation into the mouths of the young,—each of these is an equally familiar sight.

So, too, it must be confessed, is the robin's biting into the ripest strawberries in the carefully mulched patch, or his slicing the sun-reddened cheek off an oxheart cherry, and the carrying away of the morsel to his hungry young. The sight, too, of the tiny squabs, with naked necks stretching above the brown walls of the nest, and with open mouths yearning for the tidbits the parents bring, is known to us all.

The young bird, with spotted breast, following his parent on the lawn, is just as familiar in memory. He is a puffed out, soft

sort, seemingly bigger than his mother or father, and always garrulous for food. His pretentious babyishness is taking. We cannot help liking him, tired as we sometimes grow of his ceaseless, vociferous fuss. After he leaves the nest he roosts with his mother close by, but as soon as he is strong enough of wing he volleys off at evening to some near roost. We are daily picking up this fledgeling and that and putting him up in some low tree or bush, in his first days out of the nest. We feel we have almost had a part in bringing him up, that he belongs to us in a way, as well as to his parents. Very soon, however, the young robin belongs to himself, and, confident in the face of all the difficulties of his world, directs his course as instinct bids him, with no regard to parents or human nurse.

The young robin tries out some of the notes of robin song in the fall, if he stays with us on into November, but it is not until he returns in the spring that he has his full song. Robin song differs slightly from one locality to another. Robin song on the Wissahickon Hills is not exactly like robin song on Watchung Mountain in Northern New Jersey, or in the Poconos, or in the Berkshires, or in the Sandwiches, or in the Sierra Nevadas, but you seldom take it anywhere for any other than robin song. Some robin song suggests very closely the song of the scarlet tanager, and other robin song the song of the rose-breasted grosbeak, but you much more often mistake the songs of these two birds for the song of the robin than the song of the robin for the song of tanager or of grosbeak.

At its height robin song is loud and imperious, but in the distance, and heard through the rain, with a number of birds singing together, robin song is one of the loveliest sounds in all nature. Peace comes with its hearing, and heartsease, and memories dear to all the ages of man. To robin song we were put to sleep as children in the nursery. To robin song we waked, and made ready for the work of the day, whether the work of school, or the bread-and-butter work of later years. Robin song has fallen on us as a benison

when we have come home tired, in middle years, from the strenuous round of labor in town. Life would be less easy to live, and less worth living, without the robin and his song, without the robin and his looks, without the robin and his ways.

1929

·THE PAULOWNIA HANGER·

MAN has changed the valley of the Wissahickon less than most places he much frequents. He has driven a road along its lower reaches all the way from its junction with the Schuylkill to the end of Fairmount Park north of Chestnut Hill. He has made a footway and a bridle path paralleling the drive, but higher up the hillsides. He has driven roads across it from Roxborough to Germantown and Chestnut Hill. He has arched the creek with bridges and dammed it for power for numerous mills, mills all gone for a generation or more. He built houses by the streamside, in the oldest days for the millers, in a more recent past for the inns that catered to the riders and drivers and walkers that passed through sight-seeing, or that picnicked here. Above the valley, on its close-huddled hills, were once a number of fine old houses, some of them almost manorial.

All the activities of man in the valley brought about new conditions, but on the whole they changed the look of the landscape very slightly. Little that was exotic in fauna or flora crept in. The stream has been stocked from time to time with fish not native to it, small-mouthed black-bass and rainbow trout for two. Neither did particularly well in its waters, though I have seen a two pound bass taken at Livezey's dam, and a trout that was a little bent by the lard can of six inch diameter into which it had been plumped on freeing from the hook. It finned as gently in that can's water as if it had been aquarium bred and seemed in no wise the worse for its catching. The only aliens that have really established themselves, however, among the fauna of the Wissahickon are German carp and English sparrows and starlings.

You will find certain shrubs and trees from abroad about the

sites of the old homes in the valley's bottom, box and Lombardy poplars, lilacs and mazzard cherries; and there are many grasses and weeds and flowers of transatlantic origin that have been for long a part of our flora.

The only choice exotic among the flora, however, is the paulownia. In May this immigrant from China lends a great and surprising beauty to Lover's Leap, the bold promontory just above Hermit's Lane to Roxborough. The paulownias here make a dispersed hanging wood on the sharp fall of the cliff, their flowers of light purple, varying from mauve to violet tints, standing out in most harmonious contrast to the grey of leafless branches and trunks and to the brighter grey of lichened ledges. They must all have come from some parent tree back of the wood's edge above. No doubt their seeds were scattered here for years before any of them were able to get a start and struggle up as saplings through the once dominant hemlocks. I had despaired of the beauty of this cliff as I saw the old hemlocks succumbing tree by tree. I had not noted the paulownias growing strongly and quickly in the sunny spaces left by the fall of the great evergreens. Nor did I happen to note the paulownias until they were well established. They made a great show, mantling all the high cliff with their fleecy and catalpa-like bloom, that first May day my eye happened to fall on them. Nature, aided and abetted by man, had brought a sure if unnative beauty to take the place of that of the serried ranks of hemlocks which had found foothold on the scant soil. All my life I have known paulownias. At seven I knew well one that rose by the side of a grotto, or artificial cave, in a place "landscaped" most formally, but these on the grey cliffs above Wissahickon were the first I knew as true escapes. None of those paulownias I knew about Germantown in boyhood were very large specimens, as the tree was introduced here no longer ago than the eighteen forties. Those that have survived of these specimen trees are large enough now, but they are too squat in their catalpa-like outline for such beauty as their more irregular kinsmen lend to Lover's Leap. So do the paulownias blend into their background here above the

tumbling water that their purplish flowers, faint of fragrance, seem to me, for all my knowledge of their Eastern origin, as proper to the place as the scented chalices of the tulip trees, in subdued orange and green, or the yellow green puffs of sassafras bloom.

1929

III

I.M. JAMES DARRACH

mentor in things out-of-doors . . .

CONCERNING BIRDS-EGGING

OF THOSE things I still have that were my treasures twenty years ago my birds' eggs are most to me. There has been scarcely an egg added to them since those golden days, whose delights come to me as keenly when I look at the trim rows of blown shells as those deeper delights of youth return when you go over packets of old letters. The letters tell you as you read how life was when you were twenty-one. The eggs, as I recall where I found this, and this, bring home to me how free I was to wander where I listed when I was twelve. Then their discovery was to me such bliss as can come only at the successful ending of a hunt; today they bring back vivid incidents of bird life and pictures of places whose beauty I only now fully appreciate.

It is as easy to sentimentalize over old collections of birds' eggs as over old love letters, but certain of these eggs of mine recall things safely prosaic. The first eggs I acquired were chickens' eggs, and these, being thick of shell, have survived through various collections decimated by accident. The collection I still have I have always called my third, but on that computation these chickens' eggs belong at least to collection minus three. Of the first collection I seriously attempted, the yellow dog I cherished for a season ate largely on one unhappy occasion, and a maid in the ecstasy of house-cleaning broke most of the eggs of the second, but here still in the third, in almost their pristine condition, are those chickens' eggs. They are sports, too, one of them tiny as a wren's egg, and none larger than a pigeon's; once upon a time there was among them a double-yolk as great as a goose egg, but after that had nourished the yellow dog, no other double-yolk was found of proportions noble enough to take place in that collection.

Once upon a time too, there were hens' eggs of the ordinary size, but those were rejected by riper taste. It was no easy matter for me at four to get those plebeian usual-sized eggs that the maturity of ten decided were too common to keep. I was not allowed to take from the daily laying for my collection. Old Daniel was inexorable in this. Birds' eggs, he allowed, were for boys to hunt; that had been so always; when he was a boy in Ireland in the days of Waterloo he had hunted birds' eggs and given them to his sisters to string. They made pretty necklaces for colleens, larks' eggs, and blackbirds' eggs and thrushes' neatly threaded on a horsehair. But chickens' eggs were to eat like gulls' eggs and plovers', so the beautiful deep brown shells of the Brahmas' eggs and the pure white burnished shells of the Leghorns' went to clear the coffee, and I was forced to turn marauder to get some for my collection.

The door into the laying chamber of the chicken-house was locked and the key's whereabouts known only to Daniel and to Maggie, an even more resolute guardian of the eggs than the old Kerryman. There I could not get in. Occasionally the hens stole their nests and sometimes I found them, but several attempts to blow these hidden eggs resulted only in the murder of nearly incubated chicks. Besides, I then wanted all shades and colors of eggs to swell the total of my collection, and such eggs, all the laying of one hen, were inevitably alike, and unsatisfactory for even padded counting. Sometimes I found an egg in the chicken-yard, sometimes on Maggie's day out the other girl gave me an egg from the sacred store, but since four year old's fingers are all thumbs I had no perfect specimen until Aunt Rachel came to my rescue and blew one for me.

I remember well the dreadful ignominy of one egg adventure, the first I can recall. Only a part of the old red frame building we called the chicken-house was occupied by the chickens. In the first low story were their laying quarters, the pens for the "clucks" and for those fattening for the table. In the third floor they were "set," and in the second they went to roost. To reach this roost they had to ascend an inclined plane inside the building and cut

off from the laying quarters. Through this was the only way I could get in to the roost, for the stationary ladder by which big folks reached it was fully two feet to the side of its door. In the roost I had found eggs those times Daniel had been pestered into lifting me in, a perilous undertaking, for his old arms were weak and given to trembling. One day when I thought I heard a hen cackling in the roost—I must have been four—I started up the cleated tunnel for the indicated spoil. That tunnel I remember well; its darkness, its two feet of height, its less than two feet of width. The crawling was easy and my heart rejoiced in the prospect of finding an egg there all by myself. When I was about halfway up I heard a noise ahead of me. It nowise disturbed me for I took it to be an old hen, perhaps the very one that I thought I had heard cackling there. But out of curiosity I looked up and lo! two fiery eyes at the top of the tunnel, and back of them a huge black beast! My wail must have awakened answering terror in his soul, but I thought it was rage as he made straight at me in his rush for freedom. As he passed I saw there was white on him, but I was too frightened to recognize Don Cameron, and he, poor cat, could not see his loving master in the apparition that confronted him in that narrow place.

I was afraid to crawl up further after this experience, and too upset to think of turning around and crawling down again, but I could yell, and Daniel heard me as he dug in the garden hard by. It was some time before he could locate my shrieks, muffled as they were by the tunnel, and when he did locate them it was something of a problem to get me out. First he came to the bottom of the plane and told me to come down, but backing in my condition was slow work. Then he went to the top of the plane. On his assurance from this place that there were no more horrible beasts there I crawled up, a small boy entirely humbled by fright plus the ignominy of being forced to accept rescue from Daniel when poaching on his preserves. Out safely once more in the sunlight of the garden I saw Don Cameron. Recognition and attempted retribution were simultaneous, but the cat was too quick for the kick.

Soon we were confidential again, almost, I take it, before the tears were dry on my face, and I wept bitterly when in that neighborly spirit so prevalent in suburbs the man next door poisoned Don.

In the garret I found my first "bird's egg." It was only a few years after my fellow townsman, whom all Germantown knew to his death as "Sparrow Jack," made the first importation of English sparrows into Pennsylvania from his native place in Yorkshire. He brought a thousand of them and they increased and multiplied so rapidly that when I tore down the nest in the slats of the garret window the eggs I got were scoffed at by the older boys as "common." I was still little enough for the garret to be an awesome place to me as I ventured off the boards that ran down its center to get at that big bundle of straw. I walked on the laths that held the plastered ceiling of the room below, stumbled on the rafters to which they were nailed, barked my shins when I fell, but at last grabbed the nest.

When I had the eggs safely on the third floor I hurried with them in high glee to Aunt Rachel. But why did she upbraid me when she had told me such interesting stories of birds' nesting in the days when she was a girl at the mill-farm in Chester County? Those stories of pewees' nests under the stoop roofs of the farmhouse, of the martins' nests in the box on the pole by the grist mill, of the whippoorwills' two eggs in a scooped-out place on top of an old trash pile by the wood's edge, had whetted my appetite for that sparrow's nest, whose presence in the garret she had herself discovered through the chirping of the birds.

We moved when I was not quite seven to a place on the outskirts of town. In my eleven years here I made all three of my collections. Most notable among the birds was a grackle colony. That first spring in the new place was very exciting because of the blackbirds. One March dawn I was awakened by the see-sawing gurgle that is their attempt at song, and hurrying to the window I saw a number of the fine fellows perched on the topmost branches of the Norway spruce in the yard. This is one of the memories that will be with me to the end. An hour after sunrise of a roaring

March morning; the tall Norway spruces yellow green in the sunlight pouring into them from the east, a-sway in the gale pouring into them from the south, their tossing tops alive with bronze-purple birds, unresting, vigorous, alert, even now after their northing flight; and over all the blue sky, the great white clouds. It is a good memory this, of blue sky, and morning light, and scudding clouds, of soughing spruces, and clamoring birds, and the blithe heart of seven! That was the first of ten happy springs in that bandbox of a house, set on a strip of land a hundred feet wide and thrice as deep. Opposite was a large pasture and beyond that the suburban town, but our back gate opened into the country. Mother had said when she was a girl that one thing she would never do was to live in a plastered house, and we were in a plastered house, and such a house! It had been built in those dead years of the Forties when a wave of Italianate building rolled over the middle states and subsiding left innumerable architectural wrecks that our national sense of humor perhaps as much as old associations prevents us from removing as monstrosities. This particular bandbox was relieved by its situation. Two Austrian pines and four Norway spruces screened it somewhat from the street, where there were so few passersby that grass grew in the macadam, but the bright pink suffused as from beneath with strawberry roan which adorned its two tall stories and the cream that adorned the low third story and was largely shaded by the broad overhanging eaves not even the dense spruces and pines could conceal. Nor could they conceal the brilliant green and yellow in which the roof of the front porch was painted in alternate stripes.

The cupola on top was a redeeming feature to the small boy since the stairs to it were so steep as to daunt the authorities, and tabooed treasures were fairly safe there. What a fine place it was to watch thunderstorms from! The small boy often stole up to the cupola on warm nights. That tightly closed cupola was only a few degrees warmer than his own room under the tin roof. He would push up a window in the cupola very quietly, hoping for somebody's barn to get on fire, or storms to arise, or for at least

an owl to hoot. He liked to pick out in the moonlit landscape places he knew by day and to try to see the great figures in the stars as they were in his grandfather's "Album of the Heavens." Early in the morning the blackbirds would awaken him and he would hang out the window, sometimes half dressed and sometimes still in his nightshirt, and watch the blackbirds carry in long grass for their nests. There were year after year three nests in the spruce just opposite his window, just too high for him to see the birds sitting in them. Lying in the broad shallow gutter of the roof above he was just on a level with them. It was comfortable to lie there on spring mornings when there was still a tang of frost in the air and to warm your stomach on the hot tin. It was especially pleasant here on Sunday mornings, for then, of course, the birds were busier than of other days and he might sometimes be undiscoverable when it was time to go to Sunday School.

The spruces' habit of growth made them easy climbing. The boy could pull himself up to the lowest limbs not four feet above the ground and thence mount as on a ladder by using as rungs the longitudinally growing branches. They started from the trunk in whorls at intervals that decreased from three feet to one foot. He took some eggs from these nests—he has six of them still, of a pale green body painted with curious zigzags and splotches of brown and black, but he took only enough, and then only one from a nest, for his own clutch of six, six because this was the most he ever found in a nest; and a few more, again a single egg from a nest, when it was absolutely necessary to have more to trade.

There were usually twelve blackbirds' nests on the place, most of them in the four spruces and two pines in front of the house, but a few in the two spruces that grew further back, one on each side of the house. The birds that nested in these latter trees were seldom molested, for they were in sight of the sitting-room windows, where either mother or aunt, both vigilant anti-birds-nesting ladies, and very solicitous of his bones, was sure to be in daylight hours. Then, too, the limbs on these trees had been cut off to a height of ten feet above the ground and the long ladder that could reach

the lowest limb was almost too much for the small boy to manage alone. His chief pleasure in the nests was to climb up to them and to look in at the eggs so securely held in their deep bottoms. When he came down his hands were sure to be smeared with a pitch that could be removed only on recourse to the lard tub in the cellar, and the lard, left hardly so immaculate as before his visit, brought trouble on cook's next visit.

Not even his friends would be allowed to take eggs from those nests and if a strange boy attempted robbing he was at that boy with all his very considerable vigor. If the boy was too large for him there was always the gardener, mildest of men, but proclaimed by the small boy as savage as an old collie, and very fierce of mien as he came running at the small boy's behest. The birds always proclaimed an intruder by loud cries, and not only the birds in this one yard but those in the spruces next door would gather in a body to attack the thief. There were very few successful human hunters of those blackbirds' eggs. The red squirrels were sometimes successful in filching an egg in those rare moments when the birds were off guard, but every time I saw a fight the blackbirds drove off the squirrels. One year a robin built its nest at the extremity of a branch in the spruce that contained the three blackbirds' nests and battles were incessant, but, as far as I could see, drawn. I rather think the blackbirds tried to get the robin's eggs, but the robin raised its brood, as did the blackbirds theirs above. In the same tree, near the ground, a chipping sparrow built and hatched its brood, only to have them fall a prey to the cats.

The yard of this place was a veritable nursery of birds. The small boy's cats of this time were of a white line, deaf and inert, and the tragedies of the nests were fewer, I think, than is the wont. I recall vividly the destruction by an owl of an orchard oriole's brood in the three-pointed arbor vitae, but the Baltimore orioles were successful with their broods, even when they built low in the Sheldon pear tree in the garden. That nest, cut off after the young had flown, I have still after more than twenty years. No harm came, so far as I can remember, to the chipping sparrows

that built annually in the woodbine on the back porch where we used to sit and shell peas within three feet of the sitting bird. Nor did the vireos ever lose a brood, even through cowbirds, though they once hung their cradle so low in the Norway maple by the stable that the carriage top escaped it only by inches.

It filled the small boy with pride to think as he came home from school of a May noon how many nests *his* place contained. For was it not *his* when he knew its every nook and privacy as no one else could? As he turned in at the carriage gate and went up the red gravel road to the house he was generally too hungry to more than glance at the olive keg up in the Norway maple by the steps where one of his pairs of wrens nested. But as soon as dinner was over it was his habit at this season to go about inspecting all the nests, his nests. It was a bad season when there were not twenty-five on that acre.

The grackles varied little in their numbers and places of breeding, but the robins, of which there were often as many as four pairs breeding, varied greatly in their choice of building sites. From the place of one year's nest you could not tell where the next year's might be. They built anywhere, placing their nests as often foolishly as wisely. The tragedies that befell their young were more frequent, or more noticeable than those of other birds. On his tours of inspection the small boy would generally go to the rarest nest first. For instance, one year he always went first to the woodrobin's nest in the lilac bush. This year was the first in his experience that these thrushes had built on the place. Every year there were the blackbirds, the robins, the vireos, the wrens, the chipping sparrows, and the English sparrows. Almost every year he found nesting the catbirds and Baltimore orioles. Only once can he recall that the orchard orioles and the woodrobins nested. From May to early August there was always woodrobin song to be heard. I have never been out of hearing of that song in the season proper to it save once for a month when the Atlantic was between, but this time that they built in the lilac bush is the only time I found a woodrobin nest in that yard of ours. As the picture comes

back to me I rejoice in it as I could not when I saw it, the brown bird among the white lilacs busied in building, her mate singing from the white birch near by, or pouring forth his song, hallowed and hallowing, his dusky spotted throat swelling out from among the heart-shaped green leaves of the lilac. And when I think of that bird the scent of the lilacs comes back to me. Happy indeed the man who may sit in the fragrance of his own lilac bush and listen to the outswelling of that song of cool rapture!

That woodrobin's was one of my notable nests. Another was that of a chipping sparrow in the box hedge that accompanied the red gravel walk to the front door. Here, where the women's skirts swished the box bushes, and not two feet above the spot where the great red wasp or locust killer made her dwelling, the nest was hidden, and the young reared. In a winter-pear tree in the garden was another chipping sparrow's nest that I cherished. Lined with horsehair as so many "hair birds'" nests are this nest had few hairs woven into it other than the white hairs of the old grey mare's mane and tail. After the young had flown I took the nest. I am sorrier than I can tell that I have lost it, for its associations are even more to me than its rarity. The old gardener remembered, and so did I after I found the nest with its black-speckled blue eggs against that background of white, that we had often seen the bird picking up hairs where the horses were groomed, and that despite the cat she had even ventured into the stable after the hairs.

Why the place lacked a summer house I am at a loss to explain, for summer houses were as inevitable to houses of this type as pergolas to their successors today. But if the place could not boast a summer house it could two greenhouses and a grape arbor whose small dimensions were made up for by its imposingness. This arbor spanned the path that led into the vegetable garden and from it, at one time, extended trellises on through the garden. The trellises with the grapes that were spread on them were gone now, but the arbor remained, shaky, but with much of its old imposingness. Its many coats of white lead were flaking off very

slowly and as yet the wood beneath was unrevealed. The grapes on the arbor were small, uneven in their ripening and very tart when ripened. The small boy had many a pain from them, but they were valuable in attracting the birds in the fall after the bluebirds and wrens that occupied the bird house on it were gone. This house was perched above the Moorish arch of slats that made the top of the arbor.

When the wrens were in possession of this box they would allow no other birds in the neighborhood. The first spring we spent in the place bluebirds built in the lower chamber of the box in early April and when the wrens came later I hoped they would build in its upper chamber, which was intended to bear the same relative size to the lower that the cupola of our house did to the bandbox beneath. The bird house was a reproduction of the dwelling save in color and in the possession of a miniature steeple that surmounted its cupola. But the wrens were not pleased with the upper chamber. They tried to drive the bluebirds out of the lower, and might have, had the small boy not put up a tempting cigar box on the end of the greenhouse nearby. They took to this immediately after it was nailed in place and the battling ceased.

The following year the bluebirds came back to the box but finding sparrows in possession, had not the energy to attempt to drive them out. Seeing how things had gone the small boy tore out the sparrow's nest but they, no whit discouraged, built again. He tore it out again before the wrens arrived, to find the sparrows building again. There was incessant battle for several days, but finally the cock sparrow stayed persistently in the box and the wrens could not get in. The small boy sought advice and was told to reduce the size of the doorway so that the sparrows could not enter. He did this and thereafter the wrens carried in sticks and feathers in triumph. The cock sparrow, however, died game. He used to come and sit before the hole as if to prevent the wrens' entrance, but if either wren was inside when he arrived he was quickly catapulted off. If, however, he arrived when both were out it took their united fury to dislodge him. The female sparrow gave

up as soon as the hole was made smaller and started in to build under the side porch eaves, where the small boy gathered her eggs up to the number of eleven before she became discouraged by his pilfering and left for a low spruce top in a neighboring yard.

Some years the small boy had other families of wrens on the place, for he put up many boxes. And in the neighboring yards the wrens flourished maugre sparrows. No bird makes a cheerier neighbor; no bird builds a cosier nest. The first one the small boy found was before he came to live here, in a willow tree in a pasture. He was hunting for a letter box the girls of the neighborhood of a "set" older had established for the romance's sake of hiding letters and finding letters in an out-of-the-way place. They had talked "secrets" before the small boy and he, insulted, would have revenge. He did not, for he could not find the letter box, but he did find a wren's nest. This nest was in an old woodpecker hole in a pollard willow that leaned so that the small boy could scramble up to the hole into which he had seen the bird go. The wood was so rotten that he was able to pull it out down to the level of the nest. That wren's nest he destroyed, but never another. Other wrens' nests that he remembers well are three. One was in the shed of the barn of the old place that lay back of our Italianate villa. Timbers used in building before had been used in the construction of the shed. One of these serving to tie together the two slopes of the roof and the supports that sustained the roof had a mortise cut in it. The timber happened to be so placed that the mortise, about three inches long, three inches deep and an inch and a half wide, opened upward. This hole the wrens, who could come in and out at will from the open side of the shed, had filled in with feathers, leaving out entirely the sticks that are the almost invariable substructure of the nest. How I came upon the nest I do not remember. I suppose I saw the birds frequenting the shed, but I shall never forget the seven ruddy little eggs in that diminutive feathered hole. It was just the place for their nest, barring rats, with protection from the worst of weather and excellent spider hunting all about.

I can never see a cowshed of a certain type without recalling

another wren's nest. This particular shed stood in the open in a neighbor's cow pasture, a simple structure whose roof was supported by four corner posts that reached some seven feet above the ground. Boards were nailed on all its four sides almost down to cow height. Back of one of the rough cedar cornerposts the wrens had stowed away just enough sticks to hold in the bunch of feathers in which they laid their eggs. An egg taken from this nest I traded with the son of the owner of the pasture for an alligator's egg. True, the alligator's egg had a little crack in one end and was neatly mended with courtplaster, but it was a treasure beyond price to the small boy, who had not even a snake's egg, and of all reptiles, only a tortoise's. As I think what that scene must have been I wish I might now see such another, the small boy's secret joy in realizing that he had taken that egg from the bigger boy's lot, his insistence on the extreme rarity of wrens' eggs, the bigger boy's condescending amusement in allowing the small boy to think he was giving something for something, when he was giving almost nothing for a valuable, a valuable so damaged that its possessor had no pangs in parting from it for a trifle.

But no joy in the trickery of trade compares to the joy of finding a bird's nest. There are few greater joys the small boy may know than this of sticking his hand into a nest and feeling the eggs and soft lining warm from the little feathery body he has just scared off. A bird's temperature is indeed so much above ours that anyone having once held a bird in his hand will never again wonder how they survive our rigorous winters. Another wren's nest dear to me still exists as I write in a cigar box in our present back yard. From this came the most trusting swarm of young I ever knew. Our great Maltese, George Fox, was too full of years and dignity to be much of a hunter but his Friendly name did not prevent him from picking up the young birds that Providence cast before him. Whenever he went near the wren's box he was well scolded by the birds. Although such scoldings were an affront to his dignity he had to suffer them, for the way from the kitchen to certain of his basking places led past the wren's box. George had just dragged

himself to the top of the woodpile about ten feet from the wren box this June day when there came fluttering from the box one of the young that were being introduced to the world. This innocent fledgling directed his tumbling flight straight at George, and before either of the two of us who were opportunely on hand could intervene had landed on his head. There it sat unconcerned, until George moved his head, when it fluttered further, lighting on the fence. George was thrust into the cellar for the rest of the day and none of that brood fell into his maw.

But neither in this wren's nest on the place I now have, with its rarer nests to me of chimney swallow and wood pewee and scarlet tanager, nor the place I lived in after we left that beloved villa of strawberry roan, with its red gravel walks and Norway spruces, have I felt the same proprietorship in the birds' nests. In our next place we had instead of the grackles, chats and indigo buntings, downy woodpeckers and cuckoos, and there were cowbirds' eggs to be found in many of the nests of song-sparrow and chipping sparrow and red-eyed vireo, but I was never sure I knew the place of every nest in the five acres as I did know every nest in the acre. Not that there were many more nests on the larger grounds. I never found more than thirty there in a season, although the number of robins equalled that of the grackle colony we had left, and although there were more and rarer varieties. This total of thirty was never reached moreover, until the leaves fell, for I had not now the time to watch and wait, which is the way to find, that I had before. Then I had known of every nest before the birds had finished building.

When I come upon a bird's nest today I know that thrill I knew twenty-five years ago, the thrill that comes with the discovery of beautiful things. The desire of the chase that led me to nests as a boy is with me still, but I have lost, of course, the rapacious lust to seize them. And with the loss of that lust has gone, I sometimes think, some part of the power to find nests. One spring day two years ago I was walking down a sunken lane I had walked three or four times before within two weeks. This day I saw as I passed

three nests, all in plain sight, that I had not seen before, but that had evidently been there for at least two weeks, and that presumably, many other passers-by had not seen, for all three were undisturbed and all three were easily reached from the lane or its banks. One was a woodrobins', one a red-eyed vireos', one a bluebirds'. And so it was all that afternoon, nest after nest coming into sight unsought. I had days like that in boyhood, but I have not known since boyhood so generous rewards of patient watching and waiting as were mine then. So far as I am aware my sight is as quick and my hearing as keen as then. It is this stumbling upon nests that gives the keener thrill, the thrill of surprise, but the joy of finding what you have long sought is very satisfying. To me the first robins' nest I look into in April takes place among the year's great joys of out-of-doors with the first spray of arbutus, whity pink and sweet smelling, I uncover, the first apple tree I come upon breaking into bloom.

Sunday afternoon egging expeditions take place in my memory as notable among my earliest expeditions far afield. Having a crowd then we were not afraid to venture several miles from home, and into the bailiwicks of other "gangs" of boys. From such an expedition I recall the glad cry of a boy who discovered a chat's nest, and my own shout of "second" and other boys' of "third" and "fourth." But this time only two could be satisfied for there were but three eggs and the finder got two, and I, as "second," one. We had this day made the compact before we started out egging, as we often made it, that as we were hunting together we would share the eggs found, the discoverer to have two and the others the remainder, as far as the eggs held out, in the order in which they called out. I can see as plainly as if we had just come upon them, a thrush's nest in a smilax tangle and a field sparrow's nest in a tuft of blossoming daisies, found on such expeditions twenty years ago. I found that field sparrow's nest and I can look when I will on the two eggs I took from it, as I can look at the one egg, I, as second, got from the thrashers' nest.

Generally, however, I did not hunt with a "gang" but rather

by myself, or with my chum. We must have made a hundred egging expeditions together, whom now the whole United States separates, and we have had no walk together in twenty years. He was the better climber, lighter, longer legged, more daring, but I was the quicker to spot the nest and of a surer knowledge to suggest where the various birds would be likely to build. As I look at the bluebirds' eggs of my collection I remember they came from the very hollow in an apple tree that we had the winter previous pulled two screech owls from; as I look at that crow's egg with the big hole in it I remember it was the first fruit of the climbers we had talked of so long before there was money to buy them. By myself, as I followed the old Cresheim mill race, dry then as many years as it is now since I found those eggs, I came upon the chewink's nest from which those eggs came. What a crowd of us there were when we dug those sand martin's eggs from the sides of the Jersey marl pit where the little swallows lived by the hundred. We were the boys of a geological excursion and the rest of the crowd were our sisters and excitable old ladies who protested vehemently against our depredations.

I have left untaken, of course, many more eggs than those I took. I take none now save those I find in abandoned nests. Only yesterday in tramping through the deep snow on the Wissahickon Hills, I came upon a catbird's nest that cupped a little pile of snow. Flecking the snow off I discovered an egg, apparently perfect, but when I touched it, it fell to pieces. Such eggs, I suppose, are more likely to be those dropped after the usual breeding season than infertile eggs that have not been thrown out by the birds, or than relics of tragedies.

Some eggs I regret very much having taken. I never look at the black-splotched brown and greenish-brown eggs of Wilson's tern and the least tern but I wish I had left them on the shores of Hereford Inlet. The least tern laid its eggs on the ocean side of the narrow spit of land, on the beach just above high water mark, and the Wilson's tern on the debris in the marsh grass on the thoroughfare side. Here, too, just where our boat landed I found a piping

plover's nest. That was robbed of its eggs and after I had secured a dozen of the two terns' eggs the baymen cleaned up the rest to take home for household use just as if they had been chickens' eggs. They acknowledged that the terns' eggs were fishy but they had always egged there early in June and had always used the eggs and they guessed they always would. They do not now though, for a least tern's egg is almost as rare near Anglesea, and in fact anywhere along the Jersey coast, as the fabled roc's, and the common tern's is but little plentier. You cannot see now such a sight as we saw that June morning. There is still the narrow spit of sand dazzling white between green marsh and sea, but the wheeling terns, great and little, are no longer there to delight us with showy grey and white and black coats and their thin wild cries.

Other nests that I remember clearly because of the beauty of their situation are those of veery and duck hawk in the Berkshire Hills. In a patch of deep moss by a wood path that led to the Dome of the Taconics the thrush had placed its nest. There, against their background of browned grass set in lush green, were the eggs of a deeper than robins'-egg blue. Nearby the male would perch and send his soft notes in bubbling whispers through the thick second growth. Old Nuttall has caught them best in his "vea vea vreha vreha veha." From the nest the female would flutter away pretending a broken leg or wing as I would pass.

About ten feet from the top of the cliff that leans out over the chasm of Bash Bish Falls duck hawks nested. There they had nested for year after year when I was foolhardy enough to climb down to the narrow ledge to which they had entrusted their eggs and young. It was an ideal situation, screened from above by the rake outwards of the precipice and by a hemlock on a jutting ledge. Climbing down to it at an angle from a point some twenty feet to the left of the top of the cliff just above I reached it to find two squab hawks with only thin sparse yellow down between them and the bare earth lodged in a crevice of the rock. The young could not well fall out for the rock edge of the crevice was several inches

higher than the earth where they huddled together. They were well stuffed when I found them, probably with robin and pigeon, for the feathers of both of these birds were strewn plentifully about, and alongside of them untasted was a fine fat red squirrel, a robber of nests come to his just deserts. That red squirrel reminded me immediately I saw it of a picture in one of the old bird books, I could not recall which, of a hawk with red squirrel in claw scowling out at me. It was an incongruous association, as any thought of bird book must be in so wild a place. Below me in the chasm of grey rock the boiling rapids and then the sheer leap of water into the deep pool below! Above me grey rock surmounted with green hemlocks and in the rare air the two hawks circling, crying lamentingly their wild alarums! I did not harm their young, a negligence on my part that distressed the farmer with whom I was staying when I returned home and told him I had climbed down to the nest and had taken only egg shells. When I returned to Mt. Washington the following year he told me he had not gone for the young but he thought that a big hawk he had shot later in the summer was one of the old birds. So I have reason to believe that the young duck hawks grew to maturity above the thunder of the falls as had so many generations of hawks for so many generations of men.

Mt. Washington Town is memorable to me, too, for its vesper sparrows. Every day I walked out the walled lane that climbed the cleared hill back of the house, passing the cattle as they trailed home when I went at milking time, and flushing the whippoorwills from the stone fences when I went in the afterglow. Where the lane ended in the great field on the hill top was a rock maple. Here I would sit propped against the tree, watching the light-limned ridge of Alandar growing dimmer and dimmer until the whole landscape faded from purple to grey. Until the whippoorwills began to churr the vesper sparrows had the bare pastures to themselves, save for a pair of killdeers. The sparrows sang from the ground, here, there, and everywhere. There must have been twenty of them in that one field. But even better than those vesper sparrows I love others nearer home. On the big hill above Spring

Mill where you may look off thirty miles northwestward to the Blue Mountains, the vesper sparrows sing from before sundown on into the twilight. Many a time we sat there listening to them in the old days, and once, as we swung across the bare fields at sundown one sprang up before us, and there just at our feet was the nest set deep in the ground with its four brown-green eggs. That was the first nest we found together, that is the happiest nesting memory of them all. Since then whenever I hear the vesper sparrow sing, or one flits slantingly away from me across a high pasture, I see that bare hill with its mounting stone walls, its lonely cedar against the red gold glow, the far purple mountains laden with massed white clouds, but clearer than all the glad grey eyes, the flushed cheeks, the blown hair of a girl.

1905

·THE FLICKER·

CLUMSINESS is not a characteristic usually associated with birds. That it is not is perhaps because most of the birds with which we are familiar are of pleasant shapes and suave movements. All the members of the families of larks and orioles, sparrows and swallows, warblers and thrushes are distinguished by grace of bearing, ease of flight and arch behavior. Crows and jays and flycatchers have, it is true, certain awkward postures and jerky motions, but there are few others among the *Passeres* so afflicted. And, outside the perching birds, the quails and doves, the hawks and whippoorwills, the phalaropes and plovers, the gulls and terns are many of them wonders of grace. The cuckoos and kingfishers, of families closely akin to the perching birds, are less fortunate in their movements and attitudes. And there is hardly a woodpecker of them all which knows how to order his flight and hopping about and general deportment as do the perching birds.

Of the clumsy family of woodpeckers none is clumsier than the flicker. And if the red-head or the logcock is as clumsy the flicker is more in evidence than either. The flicker is more a bird of orchard and dooryard than any of the woodpeckers. From March to November he is about in numbers, and odd members of his clan may be come upon all winter through in sheltered swales and woodsides. Only three times have I known red-headed woodpeckers to nest in our neighborhood, but no year has passed that we have not had the loud and warm-colored flickers raising their young in some stub of the lane trees or of those of the near woods. One year a pair nested in the swamp maple that leans over our house, and, earlier, before disease exterminated all our chestnut trees, the

flickers nested regularly in the dead limb of the big fellow that shaded the barn.

The flickers take all the world into their confidence from the moment of their arrival from the south. They bounce about the leafless trees with much flashing of yellow feathers. They drum on dead limbs that act as sounding boards to their steady strokes. They yaffle loudly across the hills, answering one another from long distances. They yaffle gently, almost as if under breath, bringing their usually rattling notes almost to the soft cadences of a love song. They gather, sometimes, until nearly a dozen are flashing about noisily in one great oak-top.

The courting of the flickers is the most brazenly open of all creatures, and the noisiest. Never are they clumsier than in their love play, or more ridiculous in mien and demeanor. No pigeons on a sunny roof are so prodigal of parade and of puffing out of feathers, of bowing and of scraping, and of gurgling, as the flickers. They flop up limb, they drop backwards down limb. They spread tail and bubble out the most surprising gutturals. They swell themselves up, showing the black crescent on breast and the red back of the head, but most of all the warm yellows under-wing.

The flickers are energetic hewers of wood when the time comes for nest-making. They drive their pear-shaped cavity downward a foot often in the dead limb chosen for their nursery, rounding out its lower part until it comes within a half inch of the exterior of the limb. The entrance hole is about two inches in diameter. The eggs are laid on chips left in the cavity, seldom less than five eggs, often as many as nine, and sometimes even ten. The inch-long eggs of white seem small for the foot-long bird. The flickers are hard-working parents, both of them, gathering the food for their young from all sorts of places. They hunt the lawn for earthworms like the robins. They drive their bills deep into ant hills and lick up workers and larvae alike with those active tongues of theirs. They steal cherries and strawberries for their late broods. They drill grubs out of dead limbs in true woodpecker fashion.

The flickers are as often on the ground about our place as on

the trees, at some seasons oftener. After berries turn on haws and dog-woods in the fall they glut themselves on the highly colored fruit. But still they frequent the ant hills, and still they prod for worms about the waterbarrels like woodcock. At this season, too, the flickers are often on the ground along the roads and wood's edges. They rise, one after another, as you approach them, showing that white of rump that is as distinguishing a sign of the flicker as of the marsh hawk.

Clumsy, plebeian, almost loutish as they are; gaudy of coat; harsh of voice when heard from near at hand—the flickers are one of the most cheering features of out-of-doors on our hills. Their noisy coming in spring is an event of the year. Their vigor and bustle and racket keep the woods alive from spring to winter. Their calling and drumming in the distance is part of the charm of April days. Clowns though they are, the flickers bring delight to our hearts and refreshment to our spirits.

1929

·McKINNEY'S QUARRY·

I DOUBT if the words, "McKinney's Quarry," fall with a lyric ring on the ears of most who hear them spoken. There is something in the very sound of "The Yetts of Muckart," or "Ballinalee," or "Juniata," that charms the ear and kindles expectancy. It is not so, I fear, with "McKinney's Quarry." The words suggest just a quarry run by one McKinney. And that is what it was. McKinney was a hard-working Irishman, who had in his quarry one of those small businesses of which the world was blessedly full fifty years ago. Not more than a half dozen men labored in the quarry during the time I knew it best, the time when I was a boy at school.

McKinney himself had, no doubt, great joy in the sense of proprietorship and of well being and of local reputation that mention of McKinney's Quarry aroused. He was as definitely of his quarry, as, on the old sod, any lord was of his castle. To mineralogists, too, the quarry meant much, for the many minerals found in it forced its name into the books on mineralogy and became associated in their minds with erubescite, orthoclase, tourmaline, titanite, laumontite, apophyllite, stilbite, heulandite, apatite and malachite. No one but mineralogists could find anything lyric in such names as these, though certain of them designate minerals that you can grow to treasure as if they were semi-precious stones.

Lectures on geology and mineralogy on Fridays in the mid-eighties of last century whetted the taste of several boys in the Germantown Academy for a collection of minerals, and, armed with hammers and chisels, and with leather school-bags for our spoil, we sallied forth on Friday afternoons. There was no place we visited more often than McKinney's Quarry. It was near at

hand here in Rittenhousetown. It yielded many minerals. Its proprietor and his workmen suffered us rather patiently.

For years I had the fruits of my chiseling and hammering in a big spool case. I am sorry I do not have them now. There were few striking specimens in my collection, but such as were there would, I know, bring back many pleasant memories of hours out-of-doors now gone on the wind, if I had those specimens to handle one after another. From McKinney's Quarry I remember that I secured crystals of tourmaline, whose black depths seemed to me always to be hiding light. It was memories of these crystals that enabled me to half understand, years afterwards, a reference to the style of Ibsen, that otherwise I should have been unable to understand at all. A Swedish woman, dying, was talking of those things in which she had most joy. One of them was the plays of Ibsen. "It isn't only the life in them," she said, "and the revelation of hidden things, but the style. That style is gone in all the translations. But to read Ibsen in Norwegian—that is to be looking into black opals." Now I had never seen black opals, but the hidden light that lurked in the depths of those crystals of black tourmaline flashed back to me from boyhood, and, in part at least, I understood.

I liked, too, the apatite I found in McKinney's Quarry, especially those specimens of light green crystals set in pink feldspar, like a pistachio nut in a flesh-tinted peach. I liked, too, the iron and copper pyrites that occurred here, and most of all when their gold and red gold lusters shone out from the white quartz that veined the masses of blue gneiss. A discovery of a new vein of such quartz always set a rumor of gold afloat, and brought people in scores to the quarry and worriment to the quarrymen.

As interesting to me as the pursuit of the minerals was my watching of the quarrymen at their jobs. It was nice work, the drilling of a row of holes in the gneiss, and the wedging that followed the drilling. Great slabs of curbstone came off the ledges under such persuasion as neatly as butter cut from a tub. For years Germantown streets had been curbed by such slabs and its more

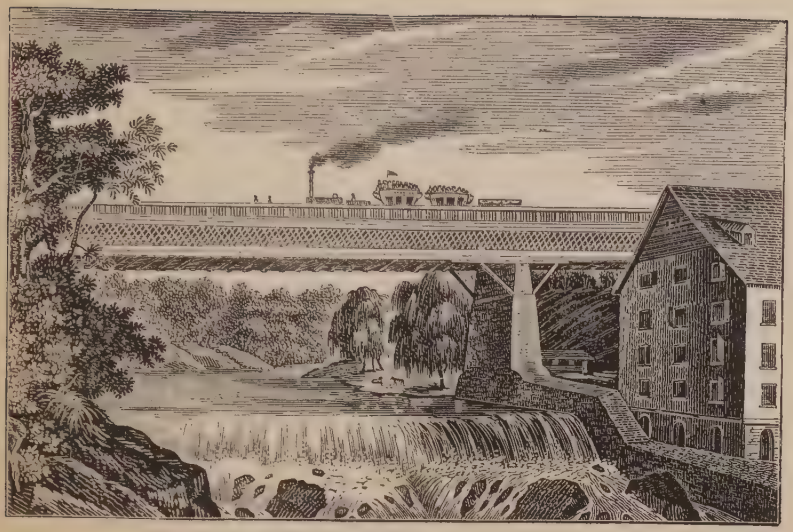
used roadways paved with blocks of the same material dressed in this same quarry. Concrete and asphalt gradually displaced these curbstones and Belgian blocks of gneiss, and all that was in much demand from the quarry was material for macadamizing the outer roads of the town.

The joy of watching others work while you yourself have time to idle had been mine from early childhood, but it was deepened by watching the quarrymen here. I liked too, to look off from the top of the quarry. The prospect was pleasing, of Rittenhousetown in the foreground, and the valley of the Wissahickon off to the left. It was good fun to dawdle about the rockface of the quarry, where there were notched chimneys by which you could climb up and down. There were overhangs here and there, only slight overhangs, just enough to suggest caves but not enough to keep out the sun. As this highest rockface of the quarry fronted west it was full of the sun on pleasant afternoons, a warm place in which to stretch, and from which to look off across the valley and down upon the men working.

> What is this life, if, full of care,
> We have no time to stand and stare.

Those lines had not been written in the day we had time to idle in McKinney's Quarry, but we felt, in our inarticulate way, the thought they express. When we were tired of mineralogizing, and tired of idling, we would climb down to the lowest depths of the quarry, to see how it was with the fish in the pool there. As long as we had known the quarry there was this pool, with minnows and sunfish both, which held their own there despite a good deal of fishing.

I do not remember that we found any garnets in McKinney's Quarry. The quarry had, perhaps, reached depths whose rocks did not carry garnets. At many places close by, however, we did find garnets, often all but weathered out, or worn out by water, of rocks in the bed of the Wissahickon itself. I liked best the garnets of dull red glows. The pink garnets were rarer, but they did not



THE RAIL ROAD BRIDGE, 1829

THE LOWER WISSAHICCON

seem to be so close to gems as the red garnets. Just short of precious stones I felt the red garnets to be, even when we gathered them so plentifully in certain washed-out banks that we used them for ammunition for our slap-jacks. There were only a few places where the garnets could be found in such plenty.

More dearly prized, of course, were those garnets dug out of solid rock, and most carefully chipped free of their surrounding schist. I had enough garnets to fill several little compartments where brightly colored silks had once rested in the spool case, and many of these garnets had associations with places in which they were found. Those associations I cannot now recall, with only the knowledge to help me that such garnets once were mine. Were the garnets still by me, to dump out of the little compartments and roll around in a box-lid, so that the full color of this one and that one would be revealed as it caught the light, I am sure that a score of little incidents I should value in recalling would come back to me out of the grey of the past. Not to be able to recall any part of the past at will means that part is just so much dead time behind you. A day lives by some slight incident that gave it color. Each such day you recall, each "white day" or "red-letter day," call it what you will, that you can recall you relive, and add thus a day to your life. Such a day is a day that counts, a day very different from one of dull monotony, which you are glad has gone forever, or a day of some "break" or foolishness or mischance that is better forgotten.

The years in which I frequented McKinney's Quarry were the years from ten to fourteen. But even before I ever visited the quarry for minerals it was a place of mark to me. Every evening, from the time we moved to Tulpehocken Street in 1878, a quarryman who worked at McKinney's Quarry passed our house. I was seven only when I began to note his passing. Tulpehocken Street was then the last street in Germantown between Greene Street and Wayne Street, and other than the people living on it and their visitors there were few who used it as a thoroughfare. I was curious about the very few who passed regularly. The quarryman was the

last one of these I got "placed." Being "placed" is all important in Philadelphia. Until we know just who a person is, what his condition of servitude and what his status we are not entirely happy. Outsiders mistake our curiosity for snobbery and say of us that "placing" a person means the discovery of his social status. They are wrong, as the barbarians are always wrong.

I was just as curious as to who this man was as if some all-important question was at stake. I applied to our man of all work, coachman and gardener to the family, and guide, philosopher, and friend to me.

Laurence had his answer to this query, as to most such enigmas that I asked. "Oh, he is the foreman at McKinney's Quarry," he answered promptly, "and the reason you do not see him often in the morning is that he passes shortly after six."

The quarryman was a heavy man, who walked with a sort of lumbering gait and nearly always carried a cardigan jacket on his arm. Sometimes his vest, too, was over his arm, and the full glory of his red flannel shirt revealed, but more often his vest was on him and you could see only red sleeves and red collar. He was most regular in his passing, and again and again I saw him plodding by in the rain, dinner pail in his right hand, and cardigan slung over his shoulders with its sleeves tied together under his chin. All was not right with the world if he did not pass at the usual time in the evening. His slow progress homeward had become a part of the recognized ritual of the day. It is the most persistent, the most recurrent memory I have of the quarry. And the man himself, in his regularity and faithfulness and hardihood, is a symbol to me of a time gone forever from our America. But as long as I live the quarryman lives in memory. A man, after all, lasts longer than a stone.

1929

IV

For THOMAS S. GATES

than whom no one cares more for Wissahickon . . .

The GLITTERING WOODS

TWO days of northeast storm have brought ruin and a beauty beyond imagining to our familiar hills. The storm reached us in the night. We first heard it in the dark hour before daylight on Friday, January 31, 1902, when the rush of sleet over the tin roof outside the window woke us as sounds out of the ordinary so surely will. We were not sorry to hear the sleet, for it, maybe, would turn to rain by daylight, and carry off some of the foot-deep snow that had by its drifting almost cut us off from town. Yet we were sorry, at the same time, at thought of the melting of the snow. It had given our upland fields and woods the winter beauty we know too little of. By Friday night we hated the rain with better reason.

All day it had blown in icily from the northeast, freezing as it fell, the thermometer standing obstinately at thirty-two. By noon there was a half-inch of rime on the trees, and the lesser limbs had begun to break. My walk to the station was to the accompaniment of snapping and falling branches. When I got home again, at five, just five hours after the willow by the house had begun to break, it was a total wreck. After a few sprays had dropped, one large limb broke off, I learned, and then another, and then another. The white maple that overhung the house from the north had been the next to suffer. That, too, was badly wrecked by the time I reached home.

Most of the way west from the station I had been dodging small branches dropping from the oaks and the chestnuts, but they had

not yet been stripped as the softer willow and maple. As the rain was still freezing as it fell, and driving in implacably from the northeast, we feared all our trees would ultimately go the way of these two reduced to great poles. We sensed the worst was still to come, but we could do nothing about it.

As I moved about the place I could hear and see the crashing down of the tops and great lateral branches of tulip poplars and sassafrasses in the woods to the southward. As we sat at supper the crashes became more and more frequent, and even the strong young trees of our fence-row began to go. When we went out on the porch at seven o'clock every other one of these sassafrasses stood up a bare pole against the sky, now singularly white by reason of the reflection from the ice-coated snow still covering the ground.

The wind was now rising, and we feared the beeches, and the chestnuts, too, were doomed. The black oaks on the lane, wide-spreading as they were, were still holding their own. We trusted they would bear the rime, inch-thick by now, unless the wind blew a gale. But by nine o'clock even the black oaks had begun to go. Every crash almost wrung tears from us. We felt that morning would see our place a total ruin. The oaks were trees as old, surely, as Germantown, two hundred years old, and such are come upon in few places in any countryside. We, of course, knew that if they were broken down we could not live to see their like again in our neighborhood.

When we went to bed past ten the cracking of trees in the south woods, in the old place across Township Line, and beyond along the Wissahickon, was echoing through the hills like volleys of musketry. Through the volley-like noises came all too often the roar that meant the death plunge of a great tree.

Morning showed a world in ruin. Only the mazzard cherries and the white oaks had weathered the night comparatively unscathed. Willows, maples, sassafrasses, bird cherries and pie cherries were broken down. Chestnuts and black oaks had lost many great limbs, the former more than the latter. The pear trees had lost only a few branches, and the sixty-year-old box-bushes

only a few central tufts. Catalpas varied in the damage suffered. Those with a thick growth of branches were pretty well broken down, those with only a thin growth from their few great limbs were little harmed.

I was two hours chopping my way out through the lane to Township Line, a distance of a hundred and eighty feet. The sassafras row that had burnt orange-red with a deep glow of yellow beneath in the fall was sticking up, seven bare shattered poles, to the leaden sky. The rain was still falling, though less heavily. It was still freezing. When I returned from town at three o'clock Saturday afternoon, the rain had turned to sleet. Little bunches of snowbirds and tree-sparrows were under the windows for crumbs. Horned larks showed pink against the snow. Blue jays were calling, demoniacally, it sounded, over the scene of destruction. By four the sleet had changed to snow, the wind being still northeast. The worst had been done the night before; few branches fell during the day. There were, though, intermittent showers of falling rime, as the few limbs still staunch chanced to rub together.

The moon came out by ten o'clock, although the snow was still scattering down in sparse flakes. When the moonlight touched the rime-bound trees it thrilled the woods with light whose luminousness was dimmed by the tenuous driving clouds and the sparse driven flakes. Later, toward morning, when the moon shone out clear, the woods quivered with an unforgettable green-white light.

On Sunday morning I was up when the sun rose above the horizon, filling the woods of rime-covered trees with a light as marvellous as that of the moonlight just before dawn. Light quivered and flashed and scintillated from woods-floor to treetops; great boles and tiny twigs turned from pearl to opal as the sun climbed the sky. Soon all the world from snow-white earth to sun-white sky was one dazzling glitter of silver-white. No Parsifal ever knew a world so transfigured. Not even the glow about the Holy Grail could have reached, in any poet's imagination, such a wonder as this reality. No city of a lost Atlantis ever

gleamed from under wave with such a radiance as this. There are splendors of dawn and splendors of sunset, splendors of all the tints that red runs in its wide gamut, but this was a splendor with no suggestion of red in it, a splendor of silver-white light. It was glamorous, daunting, a vision of the world so fresh and surprising it seemed as if we had undergone some sort of rebirth and saw through a dimension we had never been aware of before. And yet if we looked too steadily and too long the glittering world was almost blinding. It was hard not to look, and look, and look, for one had a sense such beauty could not last long, that it was inevitably transitory, that its strangeness and unusualness were a large element of it. There was no surfeit of beauty, though, for all the prodigality of it. It was the eyes, and not the heart, that tired as we drank it in.

At ten o'clock we were by the creek in the heart of the Wissahickon Hills. As we looked up from the Monastery bridge, the glitter on the tree-tops cresting the hills was a new revelation of romance. In over twenty years' wandering over these slopes I had never seen the like. Hardwood trees were flaring with silver-white light. Hemlocks, bent but broken only at their tips, glittered silver-white and green. Uphill and sunward the woods were silver-white flame. Down-stream and southwestward the woods were white, every twig ridged in the utter stillness with over an inch of snow, and the tree trunks from ground to tips of the topmost branches live white with the clinging snow. North and northeast, stormwards, the hardwoods were bitten out against the deep blue of the sky, a blue strangely warm for such a wintry world. The tree trunks were black against the blue. The lower boughs were white with snow against the blue. The topmost twigs were silver against the blue. So it was when you looked with fresh eyes. If you looked long all dissolved into one great flush of silver-white. Looking north and northeast the hemlocks were bitten out, green and white, against the deep blue, all three of the colors pure and warm. Everywhere it was flaring silver-white, stilling green, unutterably

deep blue. But only for a short while. As the eyes tired a little all again dissolved into one great flush of silver-white.

The creek ran full, a warm brown. Warm, everywhere the world was, from the sun-filled southeast through all the other quarters of the blue sky, and from zenith to woods-floor. It was warm from flooding sun, and from flashing rime, from quiet snow and brown earth swept bare of snow along the creek bed. The broken hemlock tips filled the air with a fragrance that fell like balm. We breathed deep. The blood quickened in our veins. Our senses were cleared that we might drink in to the utmost the beauty of the world.

A chickadee called from close at hand with its phoebe note. From across the valley a hawk's cry came to us with the suggestion of the skirl of a gull, taking us from this still inland scene to far reaches of the sea. The scent of the hemlocks brought us home again, and, as we climbed through the close woods, whose trees were but little injured in comparison with those of the open and the roadsides, the rime-encased trees flamed pink-purple in the sun glow. This was the first reddening of the landscape, which up to now had flashed everywhere with a radiance of intense but pale hues, silver-white dominant among them, but subdued greens and earth browns showing here and there.

Often, in the past, these familiar hills had turned wild at no more than a jay's cry, or had taken on a glory under the sunset, but now their beauty was one undreamed of before, above and beyond the natural, supernatural. And yet, of course, it was supernatural only in seeming. Their beauty was natural, though never met until now, an alchemy of storm. It was real enough, for all its show of unreality, a reality as thrilling as the wildest imagining of dream.

As we neared our home, reaching a point from which the destruction of the storm showed clearly, our hearts fell; but for a moment only. Even the irreparable loss of many trees was quickly forgotten in our wonder and joy in the strange beauty of this so familiar upland. It is what is nearest a miracle that has come our

way, this transformation of all the world into a radiance of silver. These glittering hills are more beautiful than they have ever been before. They are more beautiful than any hills we had come upon before, more beautiful even than hills of dream. As in a revelation we realize that there is no romance beyond this, beyond a romance of reality.

1902

·THE KENTUCKY WARBLER·

FROM the opening of June until mid-July the song of the Kentucky warbler is dominant among the minor song of the woodlands on our Wissahickon Hills. The bird comes to us in early May, and sings from the time of his coming. The bird stays with us until the end of August, and sings on to within two weeks of his going. But, through the presence of other song in May and through the lessening intensity and lessening frequency of his song from mid-July to mid-August, his pre-eminence among the lesser singers is assured only in these weeks of the freshness of summer. I begin to think it is time for his coming when I notice that the oak leaves have reached the full lushness of their unfolding, but I generally have to wait a day or two later to hear him rolling out his vigorous notes from the very tops of the woods-trees. These that I first hear are perhaps the warblers that pass on to the little northward that the Kentucky warblers attain to.

It is several days again, at any rate, before I come upon Kentucky warblers among the shrubs of the woods-floor, where you may always look to find them when the pink-white flowers of the viburnum are opening. The singing stations of the bird are now no longer the tree tops, but the lower limbs of the great oaks and chestnuts and tulip poplars, those limbs that have died for want of sunlight. To these, for as long thereafter as he sings, the Kentucky warbler resorts, to roll out his so distinctive metallic song. My ear does not find it so liquid as it seems to most of those that have described it since Wilson wrote it down *tweedle, tweedle, tweedle.* I should write it *tschweedle,* thrice repeated, if such a writing could be made to indicate two syllables rather than three. The full song has sixteen notes rolled out in fours thus: *tschweedle,*

tschweedle; tschweedle, tschweedle; tschweedle, tschweedle; tschweedle, tschweedle; though the bird is as likely to sing but three of the pairs as the whole four. So little liquid, indeed, is the song of some birds of my neighborhood that *tschu-tschu-wee, tschu-tschu-wee* twice repeated would more accurately indicate their song. It is the more liquid form that is so close to the song of the Carolina wren, and the harsher form that reminds you of one of the cardinal's songs.

Incessant and loud and penetrating as the song is, there is to rival it in May in the woods about my home the equally loud and penetrating songs of chat and ovenbird. By the end of the month, however, the ovenbirds and chats have moved away from our woods-edge to more sequestered nesting grounds and the Kentucky warbler is left with only the redeye and the yellow-throated vireo of the lesser singers to rival him in incessancy, and the tanager and cardinal to rival him in loudness.

As penetrating, if not so loud, as his song are his alarm notes, and even his calls carry clearly a long distance. I often notice them as I sit at my desk, two hundred feet and more from the edge of the wood-lot that is his home. Sometimes these alarm notes are so emphatic that I am called away from my work to find out what is the matter. Perhaps it is cat, perhaps squirrel, that is disturbing him, and when I can see no enemy I put down the disturbance to the shrew-mole. One morning, however, that he called me out by his noisiness I found the trouble was the old, old matter of mating, and himself as antic in its grip, relatively to his size, as the flicker. I gave up an hour this time to watching him, and then left him and his lady as apparently unwearied in strenuous coquetting as when I first came upon them. It was on Sunday, June 17, 1906, a date so late in the year, that, I suppose, the first nest must have been destroyed, and the wooing I witnessed the forerunner of the second. When I entered the woods I almost bumped into the birds as they rounded in flight into one of the long sides of an ellipse that I was to find they were continually revolving in, in the maddest love chase I ever happened upon. Round and round they whirled in a comparatively open space in the woods, that was about

a hundred feet wide in its shorter diameter. Make whatever effort he would he seemed unable to overtake her. She was always a few feet in advance, tcheeping him on but always eluding his pursuit.

After my arrival they made a few turns in which they swept more widely in the sparse woods; and then they disregarded me. Standing in about the center of the ellipse in which they revolved, I grew almost dizzy in trying to keep my eyes continually upon them. At times they would narrow down their circuit until they came within a few feet of me and I could hear the whistle of their wings cleaving the air. They would spin around and around until he, tiring, would stop off on a low bush, and sing, throwing his head back and spouting up his notes directly at the green canopy of the woods. So near was he that I could pick out even the grey on his dark poll and the light brown in the bright yellow of his under parts, cut off so sharply by its depth of color from the olive-green of his back, that yellow which is so often only a yellowish flash to you as the bird darts through the undergrowth. In these woods you are never at a loss to identify your bird. You do not have to decide that the black line under the eye and on down the neck is not a washed black cheek of the male yellow-throat, for there are, curiously, no yellow-throats at all on these Wissahickon Hills.

It was not only when the Kentucky warbler halted a minute from his love chase that he sang, but on the wing, while full tilt after his mate. Twice, while I watched them, she tired first and fell to the ground, when, caresses over, she fell to feeding. Both times, curiously, she hopped in under the poison-vine cover of the woods-floor to swallow her prey. Seeing her so withdraw I thought, despite this evident mating, she perhaps had young there; but on investigation I found that she had not, nor a nest. Her nest I did not find, indeed, until July 19, when her two young were just ready to leave it. I have more than once stumbled on Kentucky warbler nests when their treasures were little white eggs with speckles of red brown, but this one I could not find until the mother betrayed its presence by carrying food to it. I do not

wonder I could not find it, however, for although it was just where I thought it must be, it was admirably concealed. A tuft of the previous year's oak leaves lodged between two blackberry briars was its site. This leaf bunch had been hollowed out by pressing back the leaves and had been lined with black rootlets. The two young were fully feathered when I found it, but still fuzzy-headed, their olive-brown backs blending in so well with the shadows cast across the leaf tuft that you could not distinguish them unless you knew they were there.

Even when out on the woods-floor, as I afterwards found these two, the shades of their breasts varying from dull chestnut-orange to brownish yellow, made them as indistinguishable from their surroundings as when the nest still cupped them. Two days after I found these late-hatched birds the mother had both out of the nest, one where I could not locate him and the other three feet above the nest on one of the blackberry canes at whose root it was placed. For several days later I found them here and there in the neighborhood. When six days had elapsed from the time of their leaving their nest and two days from when I had come upon them in its neighborhood, I took the nest, which now had a hole at one side of its base that looked as if it might have been nosed out by a shrew-mole. This hole had not existed when I found the nest first. I wonder shrew-moles had not found the nest when it was inhabited, but to them I suppose its enfolding tuft of leaves of eight inches by four inches, looked, as they ran along the woods-floor, like any other of the many similar but nestless tufts here and there through the woods. The nest was deeper than wide, three inches by two inches in its inside measurement, so that the mother bird sitting in it would be not only entirely concealed from any marauding shrew-mole, but very difficult of espial by any passing squirrel or crow.

What became of this pair of nestlings I cannot, of course, tell, but this summer was one very favorable to the Kentucky warblers. On my walks up and down the Wissahickon in the ensuing weeks I came upon many family parties of these warblers in the valleys

of the little streams that lead down to it, and upon many others by the side of the Wissahickon itself. This summer, too, the Kentucky warbler sang later than usual, my last record being August 20, though the bird then repeated his dissyllables but twice. Of the flight song I have no later record this year than July 21, though the next year, 1907, I heard a fully executed flight song on July 23. It is this flight song that gives to the Kentucky warbler his greatest appeal. Always he is distinctive, whether jerking about on the woods-floor, somewhat in ovenbird fashion but without his typical walk; or fussing in the bushes somewhat in yellow-throat wise; or looping out after some gauze-wing from high in the trees like a black-throated green grown into a vireo-like deliberateness. Always, though you note these likenesses, the individuality of the Kentucky warbler prevails. You know him always once you know him, largely by that forward tilt of his that Audubon has so well caught, but by many other little ways peculiar to himself. But familiar with him as you may become by daily passings through his haunts, noticing him mating or moulting, hunting provender or feeding his young, listening to his tsucks of disapproval or his outrolling loud song, you do not know the bird until you have heard his flight-song, and seen his song-flight.

Not immediately upon his arrival does the Kentucky warbler acquire his flight-song. May 24 is my first date for its hearing. Nor does he retain it until the eve of his departure or regain it then, as does the ovenbird. At least such is my experience, in which July 23 is the latest date of its hearing. Nor must you look to hear the flight-song every night during these two months from late May to late July; it is infrequent after the Fourth of July, and there are some nights on which the bird omits it, or if he does not omit it, sings it elsewhere than in his usual haunts. Having once heard the flight-song at a particular place, however, you may expect to hear it again in that immediate neighborhood, and often to witness it beginning from the exact place and almost at the exact time of the previous hearing. I have heard the song at twenty minutes after three o'clock in the full sunlight of a July

afternoon, I have heard it at nine o'clock at night, and on a dark night at that. Witness May 26, 1908, at my home in Germantown. The usual time of the flight-song is at afterglow, however, between sunset and twilight.

The flight-song is all the more interesting in that the manner of its performance, and even its notes, differ from time to time, as may, too, the times of its execution. How interesting it is to me I know now more surely than ever, for in looking over my notes for a typical description of it I find that I, who have to drive myself to make notes, have again and again described this flight-song. So differing are the performances I record, I cannot pick out any one and say that it is really typical. At times a particular Kentucky warbler, whose home is the dry wood-lot southeastward of my house, would throw himself into the air from a big chestnut tree just without the wood-lot and drive himself so far in his ecstasy that he would fall into a little sassafras tree on my lawn two hundred feet away from his starting point and fifty feet lower than it. He would then loop across the field to his home by a flight that at its highest was not six feet above the ground. Such was his performance at twenty minutes past three of Sunday, June 24, 1906. Thus I record it: "While with the boy on the lawn I was attracted by the song of the Kentucky warbler. I turned in time to see him shooting up from the big chestnut tree in Mrs. Smith's lot, climbing and singing. As he began to fall his song changed to the well known notes of the wood-song. It is all good, the bird-song on the cool air, the catalpa flowers and green woods-edge sharp against the intensest of blue skies."

Often about five minutes before he began his flight-song this particular Kentucky warbler would initiate its ceremonies by tschucking in the bushes. After a minute of that he would mount to the lower limb of some tree and sing his usual wood-song. Then, before throwing himself into the air he would tschuck again, this time in the tree-tops, and perhaps sing his usual notes once or twice over. Then, without further warning, he would launch out into the air, not singing, perhaps, until he had flown fifty feet clear

of the woods, when the specific flight notes would be showered out, the wood-song sounding again as he began to fall.

Most memorable to me of all the flight-songs I have ever heard the Kentucky warbler sing was that of June 22, 1906. I was sitting about two hundred feet from the woods-edge I have so often mentioned, opposite a white oak about fifty feet high. Just back of this white oak in the wood-lot was his favorite daytime singing station. I had been sitting waiting for his flight-song since quarter past seven. I had heard his flight-song at twenty minutes past seven two evenings before. At twenty-five minutes to eight, when I was about to give him up as I had had to on the previous evening, I heard my bird. I looked up and saw him climbing the air from the white oak. He drove upward, past fluttering bats, at quite a sharp angle, right toward the heart of the fading sun-glow in the west, singing thrillingly. Then, as the force of his flight was spent, he swerved eastward toward the woods-edge, and entered it again at a point about two hundred feet from that at which he left it, and at about the same height, having described roughly the radius and arc of a quarter circle whose plane was at an angle of about forty-five degrees with the earth.

It was a particularly full and ecstatic flight-song, and to me at that place and hour it was a thing inspiring, and this, too, not only because of the song itself and the place and the hour,—the clear blue of the twilight skies, the green undulation of the wooded sky-line, the odor of catalpa flowers, the day's pause before the coming of night—but because of the wonder that arises from this so romantic phase of that mysterious ritual of nature whose secret we yet so dimly understand. The diurnal round done, feeding, lovemaking, singing over, the bird crowned all with this song, with so much more of lift to it than to his daytime notes alone, so much of thrilled thanksgiving, so much of brave joy. Back in the woods again the Kentucky warbler sang no more his wood-song nor did I hear him even tschucking or tseeping among the bushes. After the evensong was silence and the night.

1909

·CRAB CREEK·

THERE were other creatures of interest in Crab Creek than its "crabs." Those "crabs" were, of course, crawfish, and the creek was named what it was for the number of them in its short quarter-mile of length. It began in a spring below a sharply rising hanging wood of oak and tulip-poplar and sassafras. It flowed underground in a stone drain, made before my time, for at least half its course to Paper Mill Run. Paper Mill Run was so named because on it stood the Rittenhouse Paper Mill, the first paper mill in America. Paper Mill Run was really a creek rather than a "run," and Crab Creek really only a "run," but so does popular parlance disregard nice distinctions.

It was a spring run of clear cold water such as crawfish delight in. The crawfish of Crab Creek owed their apparently inexhaustible numbers, I suspect, to the fact that half its course was through the stone drain turfed over. The run ran into the drain from its spring hole, and ran out into the sun again only at the meadow's end. The little creatures that sought the covered half, or lived there, were safe from most enemies, though snakes and muskrats both had holes down into its darkness.

Here frogs grew to heroic proportions, even one three-legged fellow that had lost one of its fore-feet through some mischance. This fellow I caught one day when he had come out at the tunnel's end for a sunning, and had strayed too far from its mouth. I kept him for a summer in a flour-barrel aquarium, from which his "more-rumming" of nights rolled out near and far with the barrel sides acting as a sounding board. Finally a neighbor objected to the racket, and I returned the frog to his old home. There I saw him again next spring, looking as sleek and fat as before.

This fine fellow had several mates in Crab Creek as large as himself, a good five inches from nose to rump. The frogs, and the toads, too, spawned in a little pool just by the run, where a weak spring seeped out of the hillside. Tadpoles of both species were plenty here in the warm water, but there were few of either species in the colder water of the creek. When they found themselves there they no doubt made off down stream to Paper Mill Run and into the sunny shallows of the Water Works Dam just below.

About fifty yards below the spring-hole under the hanging woods another little run came, also underground, into the larger underground run. Labor had been spent prodigally here by those who wished to make this low-lying meadow into a hayfield of lush grass. The water of this latter run rose in a spring south of Washington Lane and flowed into a fish-pond about ten feet from its rise. This spring was hardly strong enough to keep the water of the pond clear. Green scum lay on its surface most of the time save after heavy rain, and corpulent goldfish dawdled away their lives peacefully in its warm waters. None of these fish ever, to my knowledge, made their way into Crab Creek. Though the darkness of the exit from the pond into the underground drain may have deterred them, you would expect floods to carry them through. It may be, of course, that there was a screen of copper wire, or the like, to keep them in, but even such a device would, you would expect, rot out in time.

The fish you met in the lower half of Crab Creek were known locally as roach, or redfins. They were the blacknosed dace of the fish-books. They were little fellows of less than a finger's length, with a dark line dividing their gray-green backs from their light colored bellies, and they had distinctive red fins. They were not often bothered by me, for I had learned that they would either jump out of my primitive aquaria, or give up the ghost in a day or two if they failed to jump out. I was content, after such experiences, to watch them sporting in the sun, heads always upstream, or to startle them into flickering away downstream by letting my shadow fall across the water where they poised. The

dace would sometimes disappear into the drain, but come dashing out again, as quickly as they darted in. Their zigzag progress of quick angular turns instead of by a straight line downstream was as distinctive of them as their flushed fins.

To me, as a child, they were no more attractive, however, than the crawfish. The crawfish I liked because they were fun to hunt. You never knew whether or not you would find one lurking underneath when you lifted a stone in the creek's bed. And, sometimes, you did not know even when you had lifted a stone. You had often to wait until the water cleared to spot your "crab." I liked the crawfish, too, because they were so like little lobsters. The miniature of something that goes with grown-ups, that is cherished by grown-ups, is always delectable to a child. Lobsters were a something sought by grown-ups. That fact made their miniatures, the crawfish, the dearer to me. And they have beauty in a way. With tail tucked under, and scudding backwards over golden sand, their shells of faint pink take on loveliness from the sunlit rippling water.

Many hours of my life from seven to ten were spent in this meadow over Crab Creek, and in the little swale in which the meadow ended to the west, and on the hillside above the swale, where the run ran in the open. The meadow was seldom used by its owners, save for one cutting of grass. Some years there was not even the one cutting. Father horrified the owners of the meadow by proposing to rent it as a pasture for our cow. "No cow had ever pastured in Blank's meadow," we were told, which was tantamount to a declaration that no cow ever should. In the end, though, after the owners died, the meadow was sold and desecrated by use as a vegetable garden. Strong crops are grown there even to this day, and no drought can dry it to unproductivity.

There are a hundred little episodes of those early years of mine in this safe and quiet harbor that remain with me. Here I saw and gathered my first blue-bottles, or grape-hyacinths, which I was to come to know later as Sappho's flower, and a symbol of white-cliffed Lesbos. Here I saw my first bluebirds, to recognize them,

in a snowstorm on Valentine's day. I remember the day because when I told mother of the hardy birds of bright color amid the large and slow-falling flakes, she said that Valentine's day was the day to look for bluebirds. She had seen her first bluebird in Germantown on a Valentine's day, and she had always looked for them when the fourteenth of February rolled round, no matter how wintry the weather.

Here, too, above Crab Creek, the red maples were marvelously arrayed in spring, with red flowers all over them, down to the branches that swept the ground. They were flowers that kindled your heart as you noted them tufting the branches of silver-grey. Here, between red maple and the hillside wood of which it was the outpost, flying squirrels slid down the air in close twilight. Here the woodrobins sang on into the dark. I would run over here of spring evenings to see the rabbits hopping about. When the dark began to gather too densely I would seek the security of our garden, across the lane from the meadow. Hanging over the garden fence I would watch the night swallow all my happy playground. From this vantage ground of the fence, I heard and saw many little wonders, my first whippoorwill calling, and hosts of fireflies beyond imagining, for two. The red wash of the fence always came off on my clothes, incurring the wrath of mother and Aunt Rachel, but I hardly noted their angry brushing when I came in, so lost was I in memory of what I had seen by Crab Creek, and so eager was I to talk of it.

I would think of Crab Creek running into Paper Mill Run, and of Paper Mill Run running into the Wissahickon, and wonder how many furry creatures were prowling through the darkness along these waters. I could see, in my mind's eye, many animal eyes lambent, softly radiant, intent, in the dark. I knew by their tracks by my creek that muskrats followed its meanderings, that raccoons and opossums went crabbing here resolutely of nights. It was Crab Creek put me in sympathy with all the little folk of the woods.

1929

V

For CHARLES F. JENKINS

who has built after the fashion of our old settlers . . .

IN PRAISE OF WILD CHERRY

IN LATE April our countryside in Southeastern Pennsylvania is everywhere white with cherry bloom. Here and there are old trees three and even four feet in diameter, more than half dead but still putting out lush clusters from two or three branches, trees whose height and spread and girth would persuade us that they are the first "escapes" from the cherry orchards and cherry lanes of our German ancestors of two hundred years ago. Everywhere are younger trees, of every generation from these great trees to those that are springing up from last year's seeds. All from the saplings man-high to the patriarchs big as "Dutch" barns are in blow, helping with the faint redolence of their blossoms to give this April air its sharp sweetness. Nowhere are the "escapes" plentier than on the great hills that roll up back of the wooded slopes of the Wissahickon Valley. The gardens of old Germantown were thick-planted with the many sorts of cherries dear to the hearts of South Germans, the lanes of old Germantown were cherry lined, and thence for generation on generation the cherry-stones have been bird-sown over the surrounding hills.

There is a point above the Cresheim Valley from which you may see on the hill-slopes about as many cherries in blow as you have seen blood-root thick-studding a favored woodside. Here by the gnarled and broken old trees, beloved of deermice, are others, their descendants doubtless, balls of white bloom two or three times as great as the farmhouses whose fields they make beautiful. By these again are small trees, no larger than the blackhearts and oxhearts of the homeyard of the staunch farmhouses, and by these smaller trees are others still smaller, making hedges of all heights and breadths along the fences. Such trees line the narrow lanes

that in so many sections separate the long narrow tracts of land into which the Germans divided their settlements. House standing close to house on the highroad, narrow lanes separating farm from farm, great barns patterned after the "Swiss" barns of the upper Rhine, cherry trees everywhere—all tell the story of the German occupancy of Pennsylvania.

There is hardly a township in the tier of "Dutch" counties from York on the Maryland border to Monroe on the New Jersey border that has not its "Cherry Hill" or "Cherry Valley," and in the "Dutch" counties nearer Philadelphia and between the Delaware River and Mason and Dixon's line you will find many places named from the favored tree. There is scarcely a township in this district in which the cherry is not a conspicuous tree. It has followed the Pennsylvania Dutch in their spread westward, and wherever they established communities in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa you will meet with cultivated cherries about the farm-houses and "escapes" along the fences.

The wild white cherry does not do well in swampy ground, but you will find it not infrequently along streams; it is the dominant fence-row tree in "Dutch" Pennsylvania; you will find it common along woods-edges and penetrating even into the woods; you will find groves of it an acre in extent in waste places that were once farmland. It adapts itself to many soils and to all exposures; along the fence it is generally wide spreading and, if it has room, dome shaped; along the woods-edges it spires up into an elongated cone; when it strays into deep woods it rises limbless, like the oaks and chestnuts and beeches it finds itself among, to the forest-tops, where it pushes up a somewhat flattened cone into the light; when it grows along streams it may slant out over the water with irregular branches like a great shadbush.

Everywhere the cherry tree is attractive at all seasons of the year through its shining grey bark ringed about with lines of differing intensity of color. This is its one fairly constant quality, although in old trees and on the lowest part of the trunk in even younger trees it sometimes roughens up to a semblance of the real

wild cherry or black cherry. The fullness of blossom and the quality of fruit on the mazzards is very variable. One field I know offers great contrasts in both. On April 25, 1905, I stood in this field, a field of some five acres. As I looked northwest, a woods of second growth now about fifty feet tall hemmed in the view somewhat, although the field fell away rapidly enough for me to see the tops of some great cherry trees on farmland a half mile beyond. The woods, of about half the acreage of the field I was in, was largely of cherry. Rows of cherry trees lined the other sides of the field. Along the northeast side an old lane ran, cherry lined on both sides. The trees were of all ages and shapes, though most of those along the lane and in the two fence-rows pushed up great domes of white or grey against the bluest of late April skies. The grey domes were of those trees whose blossoms were not thick enough or had not come out soon enough to obscure the green of the unfolding leaves. In some lights these grey trees have a tender mistiness that is very beautiful, but I must confess I love better the solid blossoming of those trees whose flowers are so thick or so early as to stand out pure white masses undimmed by coming leaves.

Passing from this field into the next I again was in a long narrow quadrangle whose sides were white hedges of cherries forty feet high. Here later in the season, in years gone by, I preyed on the fruit. Some of it came late in June, some in July, and on certain trees you shared the crop with the flocking blackbirds in mid-August.

To me the time of cherryblow is the very best of spring. It is just a week before appleblow, my joy in which is lessened by the knowledge that with its falling the freshness of spring is gone; but at the beginning of the fourth week in April it is a week before appleblow; that great joy is still in anticipation, with the wood-thrush song that comes at its fullness.

When the cherries are full-blown comes the brown thrasher, whom I am so apt to come upon for the first time each year along some fence-row that will later shelter his nest, a fence-row shaded

here and there with cherries. I have so often first heard him from some blowing cherry, I have so often picked him out from among the topmost white blossoms, that I have come to think of them together. When I hear the thrasher I look up for barn swallows into the blue sky that is so beautiful a background for the cherry-blow; with the sight of the swallows comes the thought of the great barns; and then I look earthward again to watch the ploughing.

One of my walks to see the cherries in blow takes me to high bare hills west of the Wissahickon, and there as I saunter along a hill-edge road, enjoying the old cherries by the woodside whose great use is to feed the birds, and the cultivated cherries around the little hillside farm below, I come to a house, or rather to the walls of a house. Close to it and four or five times as large as the ruins is a great cherry. Here I love to sit, looking out under the heavily clustered white boughs past the grey walls, over the valley of the creek, whose wooded sides are now purpling with the budding oaks, and far away to the hills across the Whitemarsh Valley. I like, too, to turn eastward where the hills roll higher, and to watch the farmer ploughing, he and his horses aureoled in flashing light against the sky. His halloo as he turns at the end of the furrow breaks in on the thrasher song and echoes back from the hills under the low grey clouds overhead. As I pass to the eastward of the ploughman on my way home, he and his team crawl along the hill top under a brooding sky. It is at lowering day's-end that the thrasher sings most jubilantly, stirring me to wonder he is not called stormcock like the true thrush that bears that name in England. The impressions I carry away with me come back many times before there comes again the sweet reality itself, the cherry-blow under the wet grey sky, the rare April air, the brown thrasher's splashing song.

But it is not cherryblow at its height that I cherish most, but the bits of bloom that come first of all. An old tree in a pasture below our windows, that has been dying great limb by great limb this five years, blossoms first in our neighborhood. This year there

are but three limbs left alive and there is scant life in any. How beautiful they are in their last year of life! Westward and northwestward great clouds are piling up, forboding storm. They soon lose definite mass and all their quarter of the heavens becomes one slate grey. Along the old road westward and on the further side of the pasture northwestward, the trees are just putting out, two great buttonballs, faint green on their extremities, standing gaunt against the western wall of grey, and nearer and below the buttonballs a row of sugarmaples, fuzzy topped. To their right a great cherry, its white blossoms just breaking out from its soft green leafage, domes against the grey. Lower and further to the right are two bloodhearts further blown, less distinct against their background of high fence-trees, and out in the pasture the old tree with the few straggling sprays of full white bloom cut out as in a cameo against the slate grey. As the storm approaches, the slate grey is veiled with the thinnest of dun drifting clouds. When the storm is almost at hand, under the slate grey now overbrowned, watery grey as of weird seas quivers along the horizon. It lifts, driving upward the darker skies until it is the livid background for the sprays' white bloom. Turning eastward I see the tall trees of the woods standing narrow, attenuated, and intense black against grey that glitters into silver. Then comes the driving rain, blotting out all, and following it the thunder and lightning of April storm. Ten minutes more and the storm passes, the robins are on the lawn and a wren singing. The light that gave the cherries life is gone, but not the memory of the white blow against these changing greys.

The "escapes" of pie cherries are characteristic of homeyards, and inasmuch as they are little trees, like their parents and with fruit of as good quality, they hardly seem "escapes" at all. The "escapes" of the several varieties of "heart" cherries, and these are the commonest in Southeastern Pennsylvania, are very like the mazzard or European wild cherries from which the "heart" cherries are sprung. The farmer cares little for these as shade trees, although their quick growth, their thick blossoming and their

beauty of foliage in fall make them a desirable tree about the house. He finds them growing up there as everywhere, but he either keeps them down to give the greater chance to the quinces and pears of the home orchard or he grafts them with cultivated stock.

He leaves the pie-cherry seedlings, however, since the pie cherry, an original type, suffers no reversion, and his women-folk dry them for winter pies or preserve them. Four or five days later to reach full bloom than the mazzards, as these are four or five days later than the cultivated cherries, the pie cherries bring the two weeks' season of cherry-bloom to an end. They seldom grow more than twenty-five feet high and they neither spire up nor round out into balls as do so many of the other "escapes." They are the commonest cherry about the old houses in German Pennsylvania, and beautiful they are, too, with bloom so thick-clustered that they look solidly white from a little distance. The other "escapes," unlike the pie cherries, are trees of the fields and woods-edges. When you come upon one in bloom you do not instinctively look for a house or ruined walls or an old cellar-hole, as you do when in this country you come upon an appletree by the roadside.

The strength and sturdiness of these wild white cherries were put to the test in the great ice storm of 1902, when only the white oaks suffered less. The tall cherries along the woods-edges and in the woods whose branches turned upward sharply lost almost no limbs, and even the cherries along fences which spread further than their tops rose above the ground lost very few. The wood of the larger limbs when green is very rigid, and tough as well as rigid. And yet in the neighborhood of towns no tree presents a more dilapidated appearance. The wild white cherry is plundered for its bloom in spring, and hordes of boys assail it in July for its fruit, breaking off and throwing down branches. Except on a few trees that by some lucky chance inherit the qualities of their cultivated ancestry the fruit is poor enough, but many kettles full of the small ruddy-black cherries, often more than half stone, are gathered for doing up for winter use. The object of gatherers

of fruit from trees not their own is to get as much fruit as possible. They have no thought, of course, for the future of the tree. You will often see trees forty feet tall stripped almost as bare as telegraph poles by energetic harvesters. There are many such desolated trees on roadsides near Philadelphia. On some of these the "escape's" American cousins, the wild or black cherries, grow along with them, and since the black cherry is plundered for its fruit for cherry bounce and of its bark for cherry pectoral and other old-time remedies, the devastation in such rows is almost complete. Yet in a few years the trees, if given a chance, will reconstruct their symmetry. I know of one old lane of them that had been sadly plundered for years, but on being enclosed and taken care of for ten years the bare and battered trees grew shapely again, passing in the interim through various stages of picturesque irregularity.

Although you seldom find an "escape" of any of the sweeter varieties that does honor to its ancestors, you do sometimes come upon remarkably good wild cherries. The boys about Germantown used to call such cherries "honey cherries." One such tree I well remember. It grew by the roadside and outside of the fence, but the farmer, whose house was about a hundred yards in from the road, was as sure that its cherries were his as we were certain they were theirs who came to gather them. This tree's ripening was easy to remember, for it was just before the Fourth of July. The last day of June, therefore, or the first day of July, was likely to see three boys trudging three miles west from Germantown to that tree. Once there they quickly took positions on its three main limbs, for the cherries of their tops, nearest the sun, were the ripest and fullest. I cannot say that these cherries were sweeter than oxhearts and blackhearts eaten by permission in neighbors' gardens, but they were excellent.

Cherrying is surely one of the greatest joys of boyhood. To lie stretched along a limb high up in the tree-top, pulling in the twigs crowded with ripe fruit, and to eat it sunwarmed and fresh from the tree is to be as nearly happy as man can be.

These particular "honey cherries" were red-black and pulpy, almost as large as cultivated cherries. They were delicious, eaten there forty feet above the earth amid the swaying branches, in the realization that they were forbidden fruit. Cherrying on this tree was not one of those adventures, though, in which the fun lay in being chased, and I never so hated a farmer as I hated that one when he spied us, and he spied us, if my memory does not fail me, everytime we robbed that tree. Moreover he was a youngish man and quick, and no sooner did we see him than we were sliding down hurriedly. Fortunately there was a wood with dense underbrush just across the road and into this we would plunge as soon as we were safe on the ground. We were never caught here, but we harbored deep wrath against that farmer and I am not sure but with some justice, for I think the cherry birds got as many of the cherries as he took the trouble to pick.

Cherry trees are interesting to boys for other reasons than their fruit. There is the cherry gum to chew, insipid stuff enough, but to pronounce it delicious, although you spit it out as soon as no one is looking, is one of the articles of childhood's faith. In decaying old cherries deermice live, and flying squirrels. In dead cherry limbs flickers drill holes: young are flying today from the hole in the cherry tree just outside the window where I write. And in old flicker holes and other crevices in them bluebirds build. Down the lane this morning I saw a bluebird family of six that have just this week left their home, an old grafted "escape" by the laneside. The cherry trees are chosen, too, sometimes by robins, but in my experience they are not favorite nesting trees save of the flickers and bluebirds. They furnish food in plenty to the birds for several weeks, and fruit that falls is carefully garnered by the deermice when the pulp weathers away. The stones are stored up and their kernels eaten in winter when edibles run low.

In the late fall the cherry trees are boldly beautiful, as they are tenderly lovely in the spring. After even the red oaks have lost their brilliancy the cherries' leaves are still holding their flushed bronze or bright red as they have happened to turn. I

have seen them great balls of brilliant red above fields white with snow. So it was on November 16, 1904. Snow had fallen two days before but it still lay on the ground, and this morning under a bright sun. Many of the cherries had lost most of their leaves but there had been enough left on others to carpet red the snow under the trees. Some trees had dropped so few leaves that they still seemed in full leaf. Along the fence-rows the other trees were bare save here and there a low cedar, its dark green looking almost black against the whitened fields. Drawing your eyes irresistibly to themselves two great balls of cherry leafage stood out above the wintry white and grey like huge red blossoms. Their brilliance against the snow brought back to my mind the season when all the cherryblow hereabouts was suffused with red, a sign of coming disaster the wiseacres said, but even that spectacle had not in it the wonder of this.

The "escapes" grow quickly, so quickly that I do not understand why they are not planted for firewood. They are beautiful from a very early age, turning red in autumn from their first year, beginning to blossom when they are but little higher than your head. The wood burns freely and brightly, if you do not leave it in the woodpile over two years from cutting, and with a pleasant pungent smell. The ashes it leaves are as white as the bloom in spring. The wood is not so useful to the turner as the even quicker-growing black cherry, which always brings to mind our eighteenth-century furniture, made so largely of cherry before mahogany came in, but before the "wild" white cherry has been converted from a tree into lumber it is far the more valuable tree.

Happy as I have been by many cherry fires, stirred as I have been by the flame of its frost-reddened leaves, content as I have been in cherry tops eating sunwarmed sweet fruit, it is the blow of late April that comes before me when I think of cherries. At all times of the day that blow is beautiful, but most beautiful to me under the full light of the sun at midday. There is one scene that rises when you say "cherryblow." I see great white domes of bloom against wet grey sky, and as I joy in that picture I drink

in rare April air, and there falls on my ear the splashing notes of the brown thrasher's song. Again I see a white cone of cherryblow against a hemlock that stands in bold contrast to it and to the red-grass hill that shoulders up behind, and above them deep blue sky cloudless just before sundown. But the enduring, the ever recurring scene is tamer, more homely than either—great hedges of cherry bloom snow white at noon under high skies suffused with sunlight, the hedges lining the long narrow fields, and somewhere nearby, as the barn swallows above are proof, and as the glimpse of mellowed stone work through the fleecy blossoms tells us, the great Swiss barns of German Pennsylvania.

1906

·THE WREN·

IT IS not only the picture of a bird that takes shape in consciousness at thought or mention of the wren. Such a picture does take shape most vividly, of a puff of brown feathers spidering in and out of the whitewashed palings of a picket fence; or scolding a cat from the inner fastnesses of a lilac bush; or bubbling out his long and little song, with head thrown back, and throat distended, and tail depressed, from the low top of a backyard pie cherry. Those three pictures, and a score others, maybe, take shape, for the wren is a familiar of the dooryard, the companion of man, the most domestic of wild birds.

There comes to mind at mention of the wren, and because of his constant attendance on the goings and comings of folks about house and garden, dooryard and orchard, barn and outbuildings, this saying or that which in the course of the centuries, has entered into and become an integral part of the proverbs of our people. Old Quaker ladies have said these many generations: "You can put out your houseplants once the wren has come." When they were young these Quaker ladies had no doubt met rhymes inspired by the old-world wren in their Mother Goose. They knew, it is likely, that dialogue of Jenny and the dove. The dove, it will be remembered, was at a loss to "maintain two" youngsters, but

> "Pooh! Pooh!" says the wren; "I have got ten,
> And keep them all like gentlemen."

Certainly she does so keep them in America. Her babes are lively and lusty and numerous, even if they are usually less than ten, six often, and never, in my experience, more than eight. Her nest, too, is always in order, neat as wax, snug, and warm and cosy, a

pocket of feathers in a ball of sticks. Small Quaker girls in America doubtless knew, too, that other rhyme about Jenny Wren, who as she was sitting "by the shed":

> waggled with her tail,
> And nodded with her head.

Like the rest of the world, these small Quaker girls, "Jennied" the bird. "She" is Jenny Wren even more universally than the robin is cock-robin. And, indeed, the ways of her are housewifely. It is a busy, fussy fluff of feathers, as animated in all the affairs of life as milady in the furore of house-cleaning. There is no neater bird, or more trig. She can put a rebellious feather into place with one touch of her bill even more deftly than a girl with nimble fingers can tuck away a stray lock of hair. It is rarely that Jenny is not accoutered for company, no matter what the hour of the day.

Children, like their mothers, cannot resist the wren. When they are very little they are sure that this is one bird on whose tail they can drop salt, and so capture, and cuddle in their two hands held together, and press to cheek, as if it were a chick just dry from the shell. The wren will content herself within six feet of you, and come even closer if you go about your gardening without too fixed an eye upon her as she gathers material for her nest or little tidbits for her young.

Well can I remember an early encounter with the birds. The scene is a willowed swale close by a place we moved from when I was not quite seven. I may not have been more than five at the time of the encounter. The pollards by the trickle of water were brave in their fresh foliage and glittering in the May sun. There was willow withe on willow withe that fairly cried aloud to be cut for a whistle or for a peeled wand. In some hole of the great stumps, I suppose, the birds had their nest. I remember now, however, only the trunks, a roughened grey; the yellowy green withes and greener leaves, and the swish of the leaves in the wind; and the green grass of the swale; and the bright sun of spring; and the saucy scolding birds.

Who identified them for me, I do not know, but since I called them "wrans" as often in extreme youth as I called them "wrens" it was probably old Daniel or Maggie that named them through their likeness to the more spotted bird of the old sod. There are no other memories of wrens from those low hills above the Wingohocking, and few of any birds save the most familiar. The other particularly clear memory of birds that comes back to me from that so old time is of the meeting with a line of geese, proceeding from a quarry somewhere on Shoemaker's Lane. The gander at their head was as tall as I was then. I remember how scared I was when he hissed at me and beat his wings, and how glad I was to feel myself snatched up by nurse and carried away from that so imminent peril.

The wrens about the elaborate bird house on the grape arbor were one of the delights of that first spring on Tulpehocken Street. When time had its will of that bird house, first a cigar box, and then an olive keg, took its place as the home for the wrens, the one on the arbor and the other high in a Norway maple. Both were occupied one season, for the neighbors on either side of us did not put up bird houses. Boxes were put up for the wrens when we built on Upsal Street. Wrens were very plenty in Germantown then, nearly every place having its pair. There were no troubles here with the bluebirds, which nested generally in old woodpecker holes, and did not try to dispossess the wrens, for which I fastened boxes, with three-quarter-inch entrances, on stable and hen house.

We have had wrens almost every year of the thirty years we have lived on Wissahickon Avenue. They built in an outhouse gable the first summer we were here, but they quickly transferred their home to a pottery retort when that was put up for them. The wren was only one of twenty birds always within sight or hearing of the place when we moved here in 1900, but he is now one of only four or five that still build on our acre. The robins and song sparrows are the only native birds still sure to nest with us, the other two being the alien English sparrows and starlings. Chipping sparrow and catbird are irregular nesters now. It has

been two years since we have heard swifts in the chimney. A dove piled a platform of sticks in one of our sassafrasses last year, but no eggs were laid. Wood thrush and redeye no longer raise broods in our trees, cardinals and yellow-throated vireos have moved to other sites. The bobwhites linger about our heath bed two days or three, parading bravely in a line of two about the lawn, but eventually they move across the road to the park edge. The little sparrow hawk visits us almost daily but he never nests with us. The wren was faithful to us until last year. Every season up to that time he at least built here once and tried to raise his brood in the pottery house. One or two years he was unsuccessful on a first try but generally he raised a brood either in that ball of burnt red clay or in the little wooden house close by it.

Last year he came to us as usual with May, but although he was much about the place for the next month he built next door. This meant, of course, that there were fewer wrens in the neighborhood, for time was, and not long ago, that there was a pair of wrens for every place hereabouts where there was a bird box. Just why the wren is diminishing I do not know. He is too constantly in cover to be mobbed by the starlings, and the entrances to his bird houses have been tried and found unenterable by the starlings long before he comes north. His food supply, of course, may be lessened by those so assiduously prying birds, but many places in which he hunts are still inaccessible to them. The fact remains, however, that he does diminish on the Wissahickon Hills, with all of his kind here resident, Carolina wren and catbird and brown thrasher.

1929

·THE WATERING TROUGHS·

ONE of the delights of driving on the Wissahickon was the stops at watering troughs. Young bodies develop growing pains if too long subjected to the decorous sitting-still proper to a Germantown wagon. We always climbed down while father allowed Don or Nellie to have a drink at any of the watering places along the drive. There were hostlers ready with bucket and sponge for the beasts at all five of the "resorts" above Ridge Avenue. At Wissahickon Hall and Maple Spring Hotel we seldom stopped. Once in a while we had the horse's mouth swabbed out at the trough where the Log Cabin had stood, just below Hermit's Lane, but our usual halting place was the trough just below the first Red Bridge on the upper Wissahickon.

There were several men who successively tended this trough in my early years, the last of them the most interesting. I can recall little of the looks and ways of any of the other hostlers up and down the valley. We did stop now and then at Indian Rock or Valley Green for the rest and refreshment of the horse, but because our usual round was north over the hills and home again by the valley, it was this trough below the Red Bridge that we came to when he was surely tired.

It was not a bad way at all of spending an hour or two of a late afternoon of spring or summer or fall. Often I met father at Chelten Avenue Station on the Reading, and drove him home to Tulpehocken Street. Here we would deposit his impedimenta of books and papers, diary and parcels, and, picking up mother and sister, be off for a round before supper. I could not realize then how tonic that drive must have been for father after the strain and worry of the day in town. To present-day nerves so slow a progression as

that of the old horse with his solid load might be insufferable, but in that far day the drive unquestionably eased the town-weary man. It was in a way exercise, too, and not only for him driving, but for us being driven. The rigid wagon bumped about a good deal on the worn roads. The drive filled the lungs of us all, too, with fresh air. It took us into all sorts of country, and gave the small boy opportunities to meet all the birds and little beasts of our countryside in their chosen haunts. Five to seven are the hours of the evening song of birds, and of the first venturing forth of weasel and raccoon, of mink and fox, for the night hunting by which they live.

Don would always make for the trough below the Red Bridge as soon as we came within sight of it. If he was very hot he had to be contented with the swabbing out of his mouth with the saturated sponge. That could be cold enough if it was held under the pipe from which water ran into the trough from a spring higher up the bank. Sometimes he was allowed a mouthful or two from one of the buckets that stood, about a dozen strong, by the trough. These, of course, had been long enough filled to lose the chill of their spring water dipped up from the trough. Sometimes the old horse whinnied coaxingly for more when the bucket was taken away from him after he had sucked in only an inch or two. Sometimes, too, he would take a bite, half playfully and half in protest, at the edge of the wooden bucket as it was withdrawn.

Always the grown-ups were offered drinking water by the boy who helped the hostler. Sometimes they took it, for they as oldsters were supposed to be immune from typhoid fever, but we children were seldom allowed to have it through fear of deadly germs. How well I remember the frosting on the outside of the glasses, and the tiny drops that formed there when that frosting met the warmth of your hand.

It was only on rare occasions we drank of that water. Most times we had to content ourselves with dabbling our hands in the trough. Even this we could not do always for the hostler thought that horses did not like to drink water after children's hands had

THE WISSAHICCON ABOVE RIDGE AVENUE

been in it. At least so he would say if he caught us sinking our hands in the trough as deep as pushed-up sleeves would allow. Sometimes, fortunately, the hostler was so busy wiping off flecks of foam from bit and bridle and reins that we had our full of dabbling before he caught us at it. We always felt triumphant if we had sunk our wrists into the chilly water, for such a procedure, we were sure, was very cooling to the blood.

Yet to look into the trough only was a good thing. We liked the green moss that grew thick on its sides, and the drift of golden sand that sometimes almost covered its bottom. We liked the clearness of the water, and the reflections of the moving branches mirrored on its surface. We liked the surroundings of the trough, the ferns on the bank, the prospect of the creek, the happiness of the horses as they cooled off. Their stamping, and the click of metal as they shook their heads, and their occasional whinnying are still in my ears.

Best of all at the trough, though, was the hostler. He knew I was interested in birds and small deer, so, if he did not catch me dabbling in the water, he would show me a tanager's nest, or a night heron wading in the creek. Years later, when horses were so infrequent on this stretch of the creek, though it was reserved for riders and drivers, that no hostler could make a living at any trough, I got to know him better. Many a trolley ride has been brightened for me by meeting him, and listening to his stories of what wild creatures are left to our hills. He would recall the time when wild pigeons came here in so large flocks they would break branches off the trees by going to roost too many to the branch. He would tell me of the quail he brought here from Virginia and of his efforts to keep them through the winter by shelters made for them and grain thrown out for them daily. He had as many stories of the blue mink as Harry the lamp-lighter himself. He was deeply versed in the lore of opossums, but all I can remember now of that is one tale of his in which he told of following in the snow the tracks of that shuffling fellow for two miles out and two miles back to his den. The suggestion of wild life that was in all his talk

seasoned for me the day on which I heard it. That same suggestion of wild life was about all the valley in these hours towards the fall of evening. It was a something to treasure in memory, a something as precious to me as any strange mineral or bird's egg or flower brought home for a tangible collection in case or folder.

1929

VI

For DALLETT FUGUET

who likes birdy places . . .

ON THE ROOSTING OF BIRDS

NO AMERICAN who has retained any of the child's wonder at the world can help thinking, on hard nights in winter, how it is with the birds. Even those of us who have lost this higher curiosity were brought up, like our more fortunate fellows, on the rhyme that informs us what the robin will do then, and with the recurrence of such bitter twilights as those on which the verse was repeated to us its burden will come back. Its teaching is sometimes true of our robin, as it is more generally of the English robin of which it was written; but as to how those birds that do not seek the barn or some nook about the home-yard survive the north-wind and the snow, the ornithologists know little more than the countryside that gave the folk-song being. Nor is a great deal known about roosting habits at other seasons of the year. Most you would think would be known of birds' night-ways during the nesting season, when the female is on the nest protecting eggs or young, and the male's calls or song in the grey of dawn indicate his roosting place in grass-tuft or bush or tree. But how can even the closest observer be sure that this first call or song comes from the roosting place. I have heard a chipping sparrow sing from a fence post when it was so dark that I could not see him until I scared him off when almost within touching distance. Yet I think it very improbable he roosted all night on the fence, which is the highway for so many night prowlers. Almost all birds can see fairly well in the dark. Many do not delay migrating because of dark nights, and any bird you may flush from its roost on ground or bush or porch vines will make its way quickly to a place of safety.

A countryman all my life, an observer of birds from boyhood,

I did not pay particular heed to roosting habits until one February morning fourteen years ago I stumbled into an incident that fastened my interest on them forever. All night the snow had fallen gently, steadily, with no wind to drift it. Now only a few scattered flakes were falling, not enough to make the dawn greyer than its usual grey of early February. The snow lay three inches deep on the ground, which had been bare before it set in late the afternoon before. It was, however, easy walking, for large as the flakes were, unwontedly large for a night so bitter, they were dry, and the snow lay very lightly. Leaving the old mill-road, cedar lined and sunken, I went down the hillside through a pasture that here reached almost to the Wissahickon. Where pasture and woods met was a fringe of blackberry bushes. I had started down the cowpath that led through them toward the spring-hole below, when the snow before me lifted, and out flew a flock of white-throated sparrows, each bird leaving a trail of flakes in his wake as he scurried away. All this mild winter I had seen them in this bowl of the hills, but I had never known before that they ever roosted on the ground. When I had left them of evenings they were generally tseeping to each other from a covert of green-briar under some cedars. Here I had thought was their roost, and here perhaps it usually was, but this night, a peculiar one in its combination of great cold with snow, drove them to seek the warmth of the oak-leaves that lay deep among the briars.

What little I knew before this of bird roosts was what it is easy to know. What little I have learned since constantly whets my interest in the baffling study. Every country boy knows of crow roosts and swallow roosts, the tall woods whither the crows come at sunset in fall and winter in long lines from all directions, the chimneys sought by the swifts in mid-August after their breeding season is over, and about which until late September they circle in great rings at twilight. Many know, too, of heron roosts, where often night herons and great blue herons assemble together; and of blackbird roosts, inhabited by some birds all the year round, and to which resort thousands on thousands at some times, and to

which many robins come also. A generation ago the pigeon roosts were best known of all, but the wild pigeon is now all but extinct.

The river men will tell you that redwings after flocking in the fall roost by night in the reeds and bushes of the swamps that also are the roosting places of reedbird and rail, and the coast fishermen will tell you of gulls and ducks that regularly sleep afloat outside the breakers or back in the thoroughfares. More interesting still are the tales of deep-sea fishermen who have come upon bunches of phalaropes, sea-snipe that in our latitude rarely come ashore, asleep on the water with bosoms as ruddy as the dawn that reveals them to the man on watch. Every voyager with an eye for birds has been struck by the presence of petrels and shearwaters about the ship days off shore. There is no lonelier sound, or more haunting, than the little nasal cry of the petrel as you hear it at night about the steamer in mid-Atlantic, the little birds all unseen as they follow in the darkness. It is strange as you lie snug in your berth to think of them who when they would sleep must rest on the heaving water.

During the nesting season it is not so difficult to observe the roosting habits of sea birds, as they are apt to breed in colonies and rest at night or day, as they are diurnal or nocturnal, on the ledges or sand banks they have chosen to breed upon, or the water nearby. They roost on the ground, in holes in the ground and on the water. Of the water birds of our rivers, herons roost generally in trees and gallinules on little floats in the reeds, but who knows where even so common a bird as the spotted sandpiper roosts? On the sea beach at night you often hear plover piping about you, but can you say where they sleep?

Of land birds you can postulate that their sleeping places are on the ground; in bushes or reeds; in trees; on houses or telegraph wires; or in holes in trees or banks or about buildings. In one or the other of such places all land birds build, and the belief has been expressed that a bird will roost in the sort of place in which it nests. But, oftentimes, how are you to tell where a bird roosts? For instance. Late in the afternoon the bird you are watching

takes to bush or tree. You think that his roosting place, but it is as likely as not that later he will drop to the ground somewhere about. I have watched robins settle into cedars after six o'clock of a mid-March evening, only to find when I came back that way a half hour later they had forsaken the cedars for a hillside thick grown with tall grass a hundred yards away. Flushed there I have watched them fly back to the cedars, and then on my hiding myself, come back to the hillside and settle down all around me, to be startled and scream away as I rose to go home.

But suppose your bird is not a bird with whose every cry you are so familiar and whose flight and bulk are so distinguishable. Suppose you have been watching tree-sparrows and snowbirds and song-sparrows feeding together on tall weeds that rise above the snow. It is hard weather and they have been obliged to feed on after sundown to get seeds enough to keep them over the bitter night. It is now too dark for you to distinguish between the birds. You think that you know every note of the song-sparrow and snowbird and that you know very well the tree-sparrow calls. The birds you have been watching seek the tree roots that overhang a sunken road. You see birds, all of about the same size, fly in under the roots. You wait a quarter of an hour and then flush them. Familiar tseeps of various qualities mingle with unfamiliar tseeps as they flutter out. What birds are there? The familiar tseeps are those of song-sparrow and snowbird—you know those surely; the less familiar tseeps must all be notes of the tree-sparrow, although some of them are notes you never heard from a tree-sparrow before. Perhaps they are uttered only when the birds are in distress or fright. You come home and enter in your notes that tree-sparrows as well as song-sparrows and snowbirds roost under roots along sunken roads. The next evening, coming that same way a little earlier, you see fox-sparrows going in under the roots. You wait a while and then disturb them. They start out with little cries that are like some of the unfamiliar notes you heard last night and attributed to the tree-sparrows. The fox-sparrows had unquestionably been there the night before and you did not see

them go in because they went to roost earlier, and when you flushed all the birds it was too dark to distinguish even this big sparrow from his smaller kin. To make matters worse, as the next evening you watch snowbirds and song-sparrows going to roost in the vines on your house you hear snowbirds chirp as you never heard them chirp before. Your guileless cat has climbed up on the lattice in the hope of a kill, but has succeeded only in disturbing them. They have flown out to the nearby willow; and now they scold Billy in tones apparently reserved for such special occasions. You wonder if any man knows all the notes of any one bird.

It is certainly baffling work, this identifying of birds at roost. One night they roost in one sort of cover, another night in another sort. The snowbirds that winter about my home are now roosting in the house-vines, now in the vines on the fence, now in the big box-bushes, now in the little hemlocks of the place across the way, now under the eaves or lower down in the woodbine of its summer house, now in tussocks on the red-grass hill, now in haycocks and now under roots along the roads. After nightfall I have found song-sparrows in all these places and in my pile of peabrush. Even after nest building in early May a pair still came to the fence-vines to roost every night.

It is easiest, as I have said, to observe roosting habits when the birds are gathered together, either after the nesting season is over, or when they nest in colonies. But what of the birds that nest each pair to itself? Where is the redeye when his mate is on the nest at night? Can you ever be really sure there is any station he occupies night after night? Does he ever sit on the eggs by night as he does so often during the day? Where do the young birds roost in the first weeks after leaving the nest? What are the differences between the roosting habits of flocks with us and flocks in the South? Of pairs of solitary birds with us as they migrate, and after they arrive in their southern winter home? How do the habits of the flocks and pairs and solitary birds that remain with us change with the seasons, and with the weather? These and

many other questions present themselves to the observer, and most of them he finds it difficult to answer definitely.

In countries where custom or scarcity of food leads to bird catching for the market or home larder, we learn more readily of the night whereabouts of birds than here in America. But even when a Mayo man tells you of snipe caught in steel traps set after dark and visited before sunrise to elude the gamekeeper, are you sure your bird was not only feeding on the ground? But netting both in Ireland and England reveals that larks roost on the ground, and snares in little sod-covered trenches prove that wheat-ears seek underground quarters at night as well as on rainy days. There are places in our own country, particularly in the South, where small birds are treated as game. There robins, seen only in the winter, will be pointed by dogs, and there robin-luring by fires at night is a pastime. Beaten out of their roosts in trees the robins are struck down as they make for the light of great fires kindled nearby. Netting by Italians near New Orleans reveals, too, that veeries, ground nesters, roost on the ground in migration. It is, however, of the game birds we learn most from pot-hunters.

The ducks are so largely nocturnal in their habits that they may fairly be said to sleep most by day. You may see them by the hundreds in winter, black duck and surf-scoters, lying just beyond the breakers, off the New Jersey Coast. They will float there quietly all day long, as you may see the golden-eyes and sheldrakes float on the inland rivers. I have seen at all times of day from morning to evening on the East Park reservoir in Philadelphia thousands of these latter ducks resting almost without a stir. The terns that used to be so plentiful along the Jersey coast spent the nights during the breeding season on the sands or marsh they nested upon. But do the herring gulls that are still so plentiful there and on the Delaware in winter ride out the night afloat? Those that are semi-domesticated on lightships will spend the night on board, and in their breeding haunts northward, in Nova Scotia, I have known them to pass the night ashore.

Night herons pass a large part of their day in their heronries, but in the breeding season they will fish in the daytime as well as at night. Woodcock, likewise a bird largely nocturnal, I have come upon in March sound asleep in the daytime on a tuft in a spring-hole, and, in one instance, on the frozen snow crust under some blackberry bushes. No bird is more generally known to roost on the ground than the bobwhite. During the spring thaws following hard winters the country boy finds whole coveys dead where they have been frozen in or starved to death. Even after her young are fairly well grown I have known the mother ruffed grouse to roost with them on the ground. They are said when older to roost in trees.

There was a time I held more stoutly than I do now to the belief referred to above, that birds were likely to roost in places similar to those in which they nested. I pointed to the well-known habit of crows to gather in fall and winter in high trees such as those in which they reared their broods. But even here was a contradiction to their habit of nesting pair by pair. I pointed, also, to a familiar blackbird roost, where in tall Norway spruces, blackbirds gathered of nights from February to December, sometimes to the number of fifty thousand, and to their nesting in colonies in Norway spruces everywhere around Germantown. But why did some hundreds of robins roost with them in a place so different from the average robin-nesting place? The young blackbirds are taken to this roost as soon as they can fly strongly, and young robins, too, but not so generally, perhaps only when the parents are to raise another brood. In this same roost cow-birds gather in situations as different as may be from the nests of the small birds in which they were hatched. And here once in a while come redwings to roost in high trees that are totally unlike the ground or bushes where they nested and the reeds and bushes in which they more commonly gather at night after they have flocked. In their summer home in the Poconos I have found tree swallows, roosting where they nest, in the hollows of trees, and in New England they nest and roost largely in boxes put up for them. In September, in the country between Watchung Mountain and the

Hudson Highlands, I have seen the birds gather by the hundreds on the telegraph wires. But if you watch them at sundown, say at Montclair, you will see them lift and disappear. At this time of day they are very plenty on the Hackensack and Passaic marshes. Do they roost there in the reeds? At any rate they must, perforce, roost in places different from their homes up country.

While such evidence shows there are many exceptions to the theory of consonance of nesting place and roosting place, I have come upon more evidence that supports it. The bank swallows of the New Jersey marl pits spend the night in the tunnels of their nests, sometimes even after the close of the nesting season, barn swallows on the edges of their cups or on a rafter nearby, and martins in their boxes. But in one martin colony that I know a certain number of birds roosted out in July and in August until the whole colony went south. Whether they were bachelors or males driven out by too many youngsters in their boxes I do not know. They came back a little after three in the mornings, gurgling excitedly and awakening the birds in the boxes to equal gurgling. I am not at all sure they were out all night; they might have left at any time before my arrival at the boxes. All I can say is that they came back to the nests in the first grey of the morning.

A pair of Carolina wrens that nested in the back of a sofa, having to go in and out of a window that was kept open for them, brought their young to roost of nights, after they had flown, to the hollow core of a rolled-up bamboo porch screen, a situation in which I have seen house wrens nest, but where these Carolina wrens roosted in fall and winter I do not know. I saw another Carolina wren with six young at nightfall about a rotten limb whose cavity was not their birthplace, but a possible roost not unlike it. I have known chipping sparrows to bring their young to roost in the porch vines in which they were hatched. I know a cardinal that took her second brood, hatched in a maple overgrown with chicken grape, to roost in the pine in which she had attempted her first brood and in which she had roosted the previous winter.

Chimney swifts habitually stay out until eight o'clock of

summer evenings and many believe they go out and in from time to time all night. The young certainly roost for a time after they are hatched in the home chimney, even after they have learned to fly strongly, hanging on the walls sometimes for an hour or two at midday as well as at night. About mid-August they repair to some other chimney, or perhaps the other birds in the neighborhood repair to theirs, and all roost together. I have known a solitary swift, however, to resort to a chimney after a month's absence of his kind from it and to hang at nights there even after a low fire was kept up below.

Of the nighthawk and whippoorwill, since they are nocturnal birds, we know something in their roosts. By day we come upon whippoorwills on the ground or upon low limbs of trees, but strangely seldom, considering what numbers are told of in these same woods by their calling at night. Nighthawks you will also flush from the ground, but generally from bare rocky places, and in the cities from the roofs of buildings they have chosen for their homes. It is in such places we find the nests of these birds; roosting place and nesting place are alike. Owls, too, often roost in such places as they choose for nests, holes in trees or some abandoned squirrel's nest, although you will sometimes find them passing the day on a limb close to the main trunk of some thick-foliaged tree. And wrens will seek holes in trees or about buildings in which to pass the night, or under the roots in stream-bank or road, in just such situations as those in which they build. Bluejays will spend the severest winter nights in the evergreens in which they love to nest.

As a boy I used to wonder in my expeditions through winter woods at the great number of woodpeckers' holes in stubs and dead limbs. They were most of them small and most made by the downy woodpecker no doubt, and yet the downies were not common breeders thereabouts. Later I heard of the bird's habit of hewing out a winter lodging place for himself. It was years, however, before I came upon an instance of the bird making such an excavation. One blustery day, very cold for August 27, a downy

woodpecker came to the decaying limb of a maple in a closely built-up part of Germantown and began to drill himself a hole. In nine hours he had put himself out of sight, although it was not until the next day that he ceased enlarging his berth. This was in a limb as hard as that in which he would drill out his nest. Unfortunately a great wind soon after carried down the limb and the bird did not attempt another excavation in the neighborhood, so it was impossible to know how long he would have stayed there. But inasmuch as you see downies in the same territory day after day all winter long it is likely that they resort to the same hole all the while. I have, however, seen this woodpecker, possibly a transient visitor, finish a hole for himself in an hour from the time I found him at work with the excavation then apparently but begun. If a downy should stray far from his roost and choose to remain in a new neighborhood for the night he could choose a tree in which he could excavate a roosting place probably in less than an hour. I have found holes in stumps so soft that you would think a few minutes work must have sufficed to make them. One of these, in a very soft hemlock stub not six feet above the ground, was bifurcated. There was the usual small entrance way, but from this branched two little elongated pockets, but slightly rounder than the downy. They extended down at an angle of about twenty degrees with each other. Was it made for two birds, and did they ensconce themselves there and spend the night cheek by jowl safe from the blasts without? And if so, did they leave that layer of wood between because they realized their dual weight might have broken out the thin shell of rotten hemlock between them and the loose bark had they snuggled both into the one cavity?

Of no one of the birds that I have mentioned do I know the roosting places at all times of year. I cannot say with surety of even so common and conspicuous a resident as the cardinal that you will find him at this season at this place, at that season at that. In winter I have found him roosting in pines and cedars, in honeysuckle-covered low maples, in blackberry bushes, and, at a very early hour in the morning, under stream banks. In the spring his

spitting tsucks at night revealed him in the pine in which his nest was. I heard both him and his mate scolding from there, possibly at a prowling cat, as I have heard ground nesting song-sparrows scold during the night in the vicinity of their nest.

It is just as difficult to attempt a month-after-month account of robins' roosting. For several months in fall you can say that most of the robins of your vicinity resort to a certain roost, in the winter that the few bunches left roost in this cedar swamp or that smilax-grown thicket or on this red-grass hillside, and that during the breeding season you hear a male whose voice you have learned to distinguish sing first every morning from a certain place within a tree in which his mate is sitting on the eggs. But is this last bird a member of one of the bunches that stay all winter? You cannot say, although you may guess that he is one that seeks the general fall roost. These winter bunches may be robins that summer on Hudson's Bay. One winter I thought I was going to learn something definite about one family of robins, who were, father and children, partly albino. But in October the young disappeared, the father, who had been about for several years, in summer, lingering on alone until December. Then I lost sight of him and as he failed to appear the following spring and had not been in the best of health when I last saw him I took it he had died.

The finding of several birds of generally unlike habits roosting together is another experience that prevents dogmatizing about roosting habits. The blackbirds, redwings and cowbirds that frequent the same roost in Germantown are all orioles, but very different in many practices of their daily lives. Curiously, it is in winter and when you find all three varieties in great flocks together, as you do about Cape May, that they seem nearest akin, although their notes at all times reveal that relationship. Hard weather and hard fare, too, make strange bedfellows. In the vines on my house two hermit thrushes roosted one November with the snowbirds and song-sparrows, and part of the time they had for companions a solitary yellow-rump warbler and several white-throats.

I have read accounts of bluebirds roosting in holes and seen this habit of theirs given as explanation of their endurance of our Pennsylvania winters, when the hardier robins are more generally driven South. But sometimes bluebirds do not roost in holes. I have seen them settled for the night with no more protection from the cold than was afforded them by a cherry tree's trunk and branches. One biting afternoon, it was a tenth of March, I was watching a marvellous sunset in which purple clouds were as the fume of a black cauldron that seethed on the gold fires along the western hills, when I saw four bluebirds playing about a line of cherry trees. The trees stood on a windswept ridge, but the birds were as cheery as if it were a May morning. In fifteen minutes the sun was gone, but it was still light enough for me to pick out the birds as they changed from one position to another, apparently seeking the most protected places. Finally they moved no more and I could pick out but three. Perhaps the fourth had found a hole somewhere or perhaps some crotch hid him. Two of the three were sitting on small twigs on the southeastern side of a tree, the wind being northwest, and the other was in the V of a forked limb, the lower fork of which was about parallel to the ground and the upper branch of which gave protection from the snow that threatened from every direction save west. Neither branch of the fork was over four inches in diameter and when the bird turned across branch to look down at me he was almost blown off through his tail catching the wind. It was a bitter windy night, but the birds probably weathered it as I saw four bluebirds on the same fields a few nights later.

Would not the ground have been as safe a place for these bluebirds as it would assuredly have been a warmer place? Is it not likely that birds that frequently roost elsewhere seek the ground on bitter eves, as did the white-throats I observed? Is it not likely that the Ipswich sparrows, snow buntings and horned larks that you find along the sea beach of New Jersey in winter roost among the grasses and weeds back of the sand dunes? Inland, on the uplands about Philadelphia, I have come upon roosting on the

ground in winter snowy owls, woodcock, quail, robins, tree-sparrows, snowbirds, white-throated sparrows, song-sparrows, fox-sparrows and meadowlarks, only ten species in all, but significant, considering the difficulty of collecting data. To add to these I have the summer records of ground roosting referred to above of ruffled grouse, nighthawk and whippoorwill; and those of vesper-sparrow and killdeer, started up after nightfall respectively from bare pasture and plowed field in the southwestern Berkshires. These fifteen records are from personal observation. Were I to quote hearsay and published records the list could be doubled, and were I to add plausible conjecture it could be swelled to imposing proportions. Is it not more than probable that ground nesting birds such as the marshhawk, bobolink and field-sparrow roost on the ground in summer?

You might think that the smaller birds were in more danger on the ground from raccoons, opossums, minks, weasels and cats than they would be in danger from owls if they roosted in trees. The owls, too, are more mousers than bird-destroyers, and they would be as likely to come on the birds as they moused over the grass as they would if the birds were in trees. Thick thorny tangles would seem the safest place for birds to roost, and perhaps they are, and perhaps birds roost most often in them. On the other hand there are nights when the cold is perhaps a greater danger than the night prowlers. On such nights their instinct doubtless sends to the ground many more kinds of birds than my list of ten. Then, too, the danger of being run across by the prowlers is not so great as it seems at first glance. Cats do know that birds roost under banks: footprints in the snow tell that tale: but I have noticed that the banks preferred by the birds are generally almost perpendicular, and therefore hard and probably noisy scrambling for puss. Most of the birds I have observed roosting on the ground nest on or near the ground and already know the risks to be encountered there. Most generally, too, I have found the birds roosting in open fields, the owls (only one record) being a hundred yards at least from any fence, in the very center of a large field, and the

quail being generally in the open. The robins I have found on the ground only three times, and in every instance on sharp slopes in heavy tussock grass away from fences or brush. The meadow-larks all the many times I have flushed them at dusk have always been in midfield. Tree-sparrows and snowbirds I have come across also in midfield, but along woodedges and brush as well, and it is in these later situations I have generally found the fox-sparrows and white-throats. Wood edges, fence-rows and hedgerows are dangerous places if we may judge by coon tracks and possum tracks, mink tracks and cat tracks. More dangerous still are streambanks, where sometimes you will find tracks that tell all four of these prowlers have nosed along the stream in one night. It is in just such places that I generally see winter wrens and Carolina wrens at nightfall but I cannot believe they run the risk of roosting there. In the daytime, in winter, all the birds are, of course, to be found in such places.

The evenings, and winter evenings, above all, are the best times to study the roosting habits. I have never been so successful in seeing the birds leave their roosts of mornings, although I have risen many days at heroically early hours. I do not know that winter sunsets are more beautiful than winter dawns, but the birds have given them pleasanter associations for me. I have seen, not to forget, gold and crimson easts black-barred by woods, and hills of white-oaks whose leaves with the risen sun behind were all a dazzle of flashing light. But, however beautiful the sunrise, minute by minute after its height its wonder diminishes in the brightening day, while the sunset grows from wonder to wonder, from glory of color to greater glory, from the mystery of afterglow to the awe of night and its stars. These sunset quests are part of me forever. Two are more distinct in memory than their fellows.

After poking about the haystacks on the broad top of a hill one day's end in March and flushing from them song-sparrows and snowbirds, I made my way over the crusted snow toward the sunken road under whose banks' tree roots I was to find a little flock of fox-sparrows. I turned to see if the birds were coming

back to their stacks. One after another flitted in calling, and then all was still. The sight made me linger, and I carried home with me, and I carry yet that picture of the three lonely haystacks black above the white snow and against the ruddy sky.

A few days later when this snow had melted away somewhat, leaving openings about the grass tufts, I was coming home at sundown over a neighboring hill. As I topped it and began to descend southward birds began lifting before me, birds that I was sure from calls were the snowbirds and tree-sparrows and song-sparrows I had been following about that hilltop a half hour before. I stood still and the birds began to come back. They ran about on the snow until they came to an opening about a grass-tuft, tseeped a little, and then dropped down and pushed back into the grass. I was so near I could hear them brush it apart as they settled in their little caves. Nowhere could they have been better protected; the snow had fallen lightly on frozen ground, and had not pressed down the tough low grass from which the high stems of the tuft sprang. Where it touched the high stems the bottom snow had melted more rapidly than the crusted top, leaving a partial overhang. Everywhere in the snow were such little pockets, and as I started on again a bird seemed to spring from every one. Again I halted and again the birds came back. So bent were they on seeking shelter they scarcely heeded me as they ran about hunting their berths. The song-sparrows scolded now and then and showed no fear, the snowbirds, just as tame, tsipped, and the more timid tree-sparrows twittered into half song as the snow grew rose-purple in the waning sun. How good it all was, and how good when I reached the next hilltop, the lights of home.

1906

·THE FOX-SPARROW·

THERE is no bird song that has for me so much of "over the hills and far away" in it as that of the fox-sparrow. As the honk of wild geese speaks to the hunter, so this long and liquid melody speaks to me. When I hear it I want to be on the road, I want to visit the distant places to which it opens vistas. Whether my feelings arise out of the very quality of the song, or whether I read a suggestion into it because of old associations, or because of my knowledge that the plump and bouncing fellow who utters it is a traveller on a long trail, a summerer in the sub-arctics, I do not know. But so it affects me.

Perhaps I feel his song a lure to far-away because the fox-sparrow was the first bird of other than the familiar dooryard birds, the first far wanderer, that I learned to know. Two brothers, good hunters that a different home environment might have made good ornithologists, identified the bird for me. It was a November day, chilling, with spits of snow. I was in the little lane back of my home, spying about for anything that might turn up, as is sometimes the way of ten. I heard a bird-call new to me, and traced its origin to a pile of rejected pea-brush dumped down an ash bank by our neighbor's gardener. There the bird sat, fluffed out but far from dumpish, tsitting loudly, a sort of lesser wood-robin remoulded into sparrow shape. No fellow answering him, he hopped down to the cover of the fence, and there, in the shelter of its close-placed boards, he scratched up the leaves with all the vigor of a chewink. Evidently he found seeds to satisfy him, for he kept busily at work quite a while.

As I watched him, I found him good, very good. I liked his colors, red-brown back and breast of rusty brown and white,

especially the red-brown back. I liked red-brown before I met him, and now, on this wintry day, red-brown, so animated, was better than ever, cheering, warming to the heart.

I heard the brothers whistling up the road, but not soon enough to have gotten away, had I wanted to. "What have you got, kid?" came the well-known and half dreaded voice of the elder. "I don't know," I replied. He looked. "Only a fox-sparrow," he said, and didn't trouble to shoot it. The small boy breathed freely again, and ran home in all the triumph of a new experience hugged to heart.

It was eight years afterwards I first identified my old friend's song as surely the fox-sparrow's. That identification came on a day, the birthday of Washington, which I always looked forward to, as one on which things ornithologically interesting were bound to happen. Following the Wissahickon, then flooding its banks in the exuberance of a February thaw, I was arrested, just below the old red bridge at Livezey's Lane, by a chorus of warbling that rose distinct and clear above the clucking of the brimmed creek. That warbling came to me with the thrill we may know only on the first hearing of a beautiful song happened on unexpectedly. It had in it, though to a less degree than had only one bird been singing, that plaintiveness that is in all sparrow song. The many voices, blending together, were in themselves so indicative of high spirits that the effect was indubitably cheering. The birds were singing from the ground, pausing in the intervals of scratching in the leaf-covered bank only long enough to express the high spirits that come from good shelter and full craws, sunlight and the urge of spring. Beautiful, indeed, the song was, but strangely restrained for so burly a fellow, wistful, gentle, and far away.

As the years passed I again and again found the fox-sparrows hereabouts, not only in November and late February, but in December and January and early February, during which midwinter weeks they disappear some years. There is here in the bowl of the hills all that they require to meet their needs, protection from foes, and shelter from storm and wind, and plenty of food.

There are bull-briar tangles here, and red cedars, heavy plumed, set in under high slopes that red grass clothes with tufts thickset and tall. Here is a spring-hole, and a barnyard, and narrow flats along the creek that store up little granaries of heavy weed seeds. Here white-throats are to be found all winter through; here come bluebirds and robins, now and again even in the severest weather; here by March you will find woodcock.

Elsewhere in the valleys of the runs that feed the Wissahickon you are likely to flush a single fox-sparrow along with a pair of cardinals or a bunch of snowbirds, any winter day from December to March. One bird I saw several times in January, 1907, with a pair of song-sparrows, at the western end of the great concrete bridge. He called incessantly if he became separated from his lesser fellows in the old fence-row they frequented. Poison ivy had grown up the posts of the fence, helping them to rot out, so that there was little substance in the grip of the twisted vines. These vines spread out, at the height of the fence posts, into whorls heavy with seeds. Between these whorls briars and weeds were matted into an almost impenetrable thicket, providing food in abundance and a safe retreat from hawks.

But despite these midwinter meetings with the fox-sparrow, and despite days of spring made memorable by him, he remains to me the bird of November. Then it was I first met him, then it is I now meet him in greatest numbers, then it is on days songless save for him and the Carolina wren, that his song so impresses me, with its call to otherwhere, its piping to over the hills and far away. Looking over my records I find there three November references to him to every one of December or January, February or March. Here are a few of them:

"Nov. 4, 1906. To Livezey's Mill. Fox-sparrows singing, many of them. Full song as well as parts of song, not once or twice but every few minutes.

"Nov. 18, 1906. Sunday morning. To Strawbridge's swamp. Fox-sparrows singing again and again. Mock fighting on swamp floor, up at each other like cocks, singing.

"Nov. 20, 1906. A man with three dogs was disturbing the swamp. Fox-sparrows flushed by them fly up high in the willows and then across the road to the chestnut tops there. At the very top of the tallest chestnut one warbled away, the full song but not of very beautiful quality. Another came to a lower branch and sang, a part of its song, but more liquidly."

This November of 1906 was memorable indeed for its fox-sparrows. I had seen none all October until the morning of the thirtieth. On waking that morning I heard their calls from all quarters. Going out of doors I found them everywhere, and at breakfast I made this note:

"Fox-sparrows, the first I have seen, everywhere about the house. A heavy blow. Under a moon nearly full they have come down to us on the cold north wind that drove in all night. Fine big bouncing fellows, they held to the beech in front of the house and even made their way down into the lane and the pony lot in the teeth of the wind."

Although I did not make a record of it, I recall the numbers of them I saw on that morning's walk to the station. Everywhere they were to be met, on the road, on the fences, on the stable roof, on the tall wood's trees, on the railroad banks. Often, after such a visitation of sparrows, they disappear as the warbler hosts about May Day. This year, however, as the notes I quote attest, the sparrows held on, and all winter through, in numbers somewhat unusual for these Wissahickon Hills. I wish other winters had been made as memorable by their song, and by their cheery ways. Very tangible are the charms of their warm color, their liveliness, their winter-defying vigor. Intangible the silver sweetness of their song, the most liquid, loveliest sparrow song of all, with the lure in it to "over the hills and far away."

1908

·THE FEBRUARY FISHERS·

THEY are gone to the last man, the February fishers I used to know. And yet there are February fishers by the creek still, lazing dreamily in sunny spots out of the wind, and hoping that some rooting carp may by chance draw in the worm they have laid by a sinkered line on the bottom for him, and hook himself as he nibbles the bait. The men that sat here in old days only half expected to make a catch, yet they caught more fish than their successors today. The fishermen of yesterday often caught a little string, but they were content had they a couple of suckers weighing a pound apiece to take home. Those suckers would vary the daily salt pork and the pot roast that was the oldsters' share of butcher's meat.

There were a few places by Wissahickon in which you could find two fishermen together, or even three in a row. Generally each man had his chosen place, respected as his by the others, and in that place he sat in solitary quietude, pipe in mouth and wits in a half-doze. Certainly the chances for fish were greater where a hundred yards or so separated one fisherman from another. With these old fellows I used to talk, at a time so remote that there were still fallfish and chub in the creek. The German carp was introduced into the Schuylkill in the Eighteen-seventies, but I saw none in the Wissahickon even in the Eighteen-eighties, the decade in which I most frequented the valley. Now they outnumber all other kinds.

We were allowed to fish every day in the creek then, as I recall it, but now there are only two fishing days weekly. There were more fishers then, too, for there were more fish to catch, and more men inclined to fishing. Even the far greater population living here-

abouts today has not served to keep the numbers of fishermen at the old total. Perhaps the bridle path just above the creek, and the newer bridle path higher up the east slope, have drawn the people away from the creekside footpaths. Whatever the reason, those paths are less worn than of old. In that easier time the fishermen were allowed to build little fires of fallen branches to warm themselves and to cook their fish, if conditions at home forbade them taking there the spoil. Often they broiled their fish on the embers or roasted them in the ashes. I have seen a pound sucker broiled to a turn on a most primitive spit, and I have been told by its devourer, as he licked his fingers, that it was sweet.

Fair strings of suckers were sometimes taken in the roily water of February thaws, but I have never seen many fish of any kind taken in the Wissahickon. The only sucker I ever caught I noosed by a looped string with a slip knot, as he rested by a rock near the bank. I let him go again, much as I prized the catch, and sure as I was that the doubting Thomases would deny I had caught him. Sunfish I have caught here, in boyhood, by hook and line, and taken home, and tamed, and kept alive for several months, and returned to the creek before winter.

Catfish, too, I have caught here, but never in such numbers as in the Waterworks Dam, three quarters of a mile above the Wissahickon, on Paper Mill Run. Periodically they let the water out of this pond by opening the great gates they had used to drain it, prior to cleaning it, when it had furnished Germantown's water supply. The letting out of the water left the puddles in the channels through the pond literally kicking with catfish. On two such drainings I brought home a bucket full of catties, and kept them in a barrel of water, and put them back into the pond when the gates were again closed. There should have been plenty of catfish in the Wissahickon, as one explanation of the origin of the name is that it means in Indian "catfish creek." It was in the dammed lower stretches of the creek, along in front of the inns, that most catfish were caught in the days of my youth. I caught few where I did what little fishing I have done in the creek, in the stretches

from the Monastery up to Livezey's Lane. In the dam just above Glen Fern you caught a catfish now and then.

There is only a one-hundred-foot fall in the creek from the Reading Pike down to Hermit's Lane but you are seldom out of hearing of falling water as you follow these miles of its course. It was in certain holes of the riffly places that you got the chub and fallfish, holes so well known and so much fished when I was a boy that little paths led to the stations above them on the bank from which the anglers dropped their lines. The sunfish I knew best rounded out their nests on the eastern edge of the creek just below Kitchen's Lane. I never caught but the one here, so great an appeal they made to me with their home-guarding habits. The only eel I ever saw in this part of the creek waved his way close to one nest as I chanced to be watching the sunfish hovering over it. There was so sudden an onslaught that I could not see just what happened, but the eel disappeared, and after some time the sunfish reappeared, apparently none the worse for the encounter. His spined fins, I suppose, made him fearless, but I never quite understood how six inches of sunfish were "able" for sixteen inches of eel.

Now the only fish I see in the creek are the carp, big fellows that root along in the mud and sand of the bottom as if they were pigs in an orchard. It is difficult to believe that fish eggs of any sort can escape these grubbing fellows, unless it is true, as some say, that the catfish carry their eggs in their mouths. They came, they say, these German carp, originally from China, and they were brought into western Europe during the Second Crusade, having by that time made their way, as so much else from China, into Persia and Asia Minor and the Holy Land. I have seen carp as long as two feet in the creek just below the Monastery. Those that I have seen caught are smaller, and better, the last of the old fishermen told me, than the bigger fellows. "They're a poor, soft fish," said he, "worse than a summer sucker, but you can sell all you catch."

On Washington's Birthday of 1929 I happened on one of the later generation of fishermen as I walked upstream from Ridge

ANN TAYLOR'S SAMPLER, 1840

Avenue to Kitchen's Lane. He sat comfortably on a bench, and watched intermittently the willow wand over which his line ran. That wand looked like an elongated "slapjack" or sling-shot stick, from which you had failed to cut out the middle stem. The wand knew never a tremor, even from the pull of the current, the five minutes I stood by it. The fisherman was after suckers, he said, but he had not had a nibble. A fellow a way up the creek had come there by half-past six, he said, and he had gone home at half-past nine without having had a bite. The fisherman said "I guess there won't be much to it today." He had never caught carp here, he told me, but he had caught suckers and sunfish, and he knew men who had caught chub and eels quite recently. He hadn't heard of any catfish caught here for a long time. I think he cannot be of the old breed of fishermen, a tried and proven persuader of fish. If he had never caught carp in the stream, or even seen them there, he could not have often fished here.

The memory of the old fishermen is more to me than anything I can get from their successors today. I can see these old fellows of yesterday as clearly as if I had seen them this morning. Overcoated, with cardigan jacket showing through the unbuttoned front of the overcoat; capped, with tippets hanging down over neck and ears; red faced from a lifetime out-of-doors; immobile, and in hunched position, they watched their lines, moving only to feel with practised finger whether those lines without floats or flexible wands were developing any bites. The clothes of these old men were always faded to a faint yellowish, making them hardly distinguishable from their background. Yet, despite their inconspicuousness, the men gave the human touch the scene needed. They were figures in harmony with the brown rush of water by which they sat, in harmony with the bleak oak-boles behind them, with the mounded ruins of mills but few years fallen, with the grey walls of the old house above taking on a ruddy bloom in the low morning light.

1929

VII

I. M. JOHN P. COPE

because of good talks on Dorkings . . .

"*The* FAMOUS DARKING FOWL"

IT IS as it should be that I first came upon Dorkings on the Old York Road. The trolley that carries me to the pike today bears only "York Road" on its boards, front and back, but in the yesterday unacquainted with trolleys, in which I found the fowls there, we never clipped its name. Indeed we went, many of us, to the other extreme, and delighted in a sort of drawling emphasis of each of its three parts. "Old-York-Road" we announced it, with something of the dignity of tone attained to by the auctioneer of that day.

Then country houses stood within hail of each other along the old toll-way, scarcely a one of them without some treasure distinctive of its family and preserved from colonial times. I would not say that the White Dorkings of the estate by Wingohocking had American progenitors from Pre-Revolutionary days. I know the *acacia pubescens* cherished in the high greenhouses of the plantation nearby had not. But rare fowl and rarer shrub were here in my day because their owners cared for things old and choice.

They fall together pleasantly in memory, the weeping sprays of yellow bloom so pale of hue and downy-soft and puffy, and the low-set fowls of hard and close feathering just a shade the creamy side of white. Aristocrats both, they are fallen on hard times now, like the manors that sheltered them. Thriving specimens of either are scarcely to be had for love or money. The art of striking *acacia pubescens* is all but a lost art, and inbreeding has so sapped the

vitality of the few stocks of White Dorkings left to us in America that it is difficult to rear stout birds of the breed.

It was the White Dorking that was to many the Dorking par excellence. I meet him with no adjective before the "Dorking" in certain old books. One of these is the earliest American delineation of the bird that I have come across. It is *The Book of Nature,* printed in Philadelphia in 1834 by that Samuel C. Atkinson who published *The Casket.* Plate 53 is devoted to Malay, Frizzle, and Dorking. The white birds, unmistakeably five toed, face each other against a rural background, but whether of the old world or the new I am not certain. "Syl Edwards del" is at the lower left of the soft copperplate engraving and "J. C. Exilious Sc." at the lower right. The cock and hen face each other in the lower half of the page, with the Frizzle hen to their right. Above them are the Malay pair and the Frizzle cock. The house the Dorking hen almost obscures has a sagging roof, apparently of thatch, with two ells stepped down one below the other, and the larger and inner one below the ridgepole of the main building and at right angles to it. The further background of trees and mountain peak is not detailed enough to reveal whether it is of Derbyshire or of Pennsylvania.

I never tried but one setting of White Dorking eggs. The results of that were too discouraging for another trial. The eggs came from a distance, the hen sat spasmodically, the weather that greeted the four chicks that hatched was cold and wet. I raised none. If only the desire for White Dorkings had become too urgent to be resisted while stock was still procurable on the Old York Road I might now be their slave instead of slave to Red Dorkings. The Old York Roader who would have supplied me with White Dorkings gave them up before he fled from the home of his fathers to escape the advancing city. Silver Greys he remained faithful to longer, maybe because of this variety there are enough stocks still among us to provide the change of blood without which Dorkings will not thrive.

In many quarters you will hear that Dorkings are a "run-out"

breed. So said to my neighbor the originator of the Orpingtons, which preserve not a few of the good qualities of "the famous Darking Fowl." It was not pleasing to the doctor to be so told, for he was a patron of Silver Greys, but he took his medicine like a layman, and brought home with him from England a pen of the Buff Orpingtons to displace the Dorkings. It was not pleasing news, either, to him from whom my neighbor secured his stock of Silver Greys, another friendly Friend of Germantown's many of the ilk. Said John Pym to me as we grew indignant together over this upstart's disparagement of Dorkings: "Do delicate hens lay well in winter? Of course not. Now my flock of Silver Greys, ninety-three hens by count, and all yearlings and older, laid eight hundred and seventy-one eggs last December. You know where they are housed, in an open-fronted shed on a hilltop. Their thirty-per-cent yield was fair, I should say, for delicate birds."

It was, surely, and it would satisfy me as a yield from pullets even, and of any breed, in such environment and at that time of year. There was no doubt, either, that they were all old hens, for he had reared none the spring before. Instead of that he had gone honeymooning to England, though not so madly but that he found opportunity to visit the more famous yards of Silver Greys and to pick up a bird or two. There were differences other than his penchant for Dorkings between him and the many. Let anything interest him, all else fell away and was forgotten. That one thing was his only concern. Thus it was that the nurseryman who employed him as a landscape engineer came upon him one day, lost to the world, amid the maples he and his gang were supposed to be getting out. John had told the men one good story to put them in good humor for the job. That had suggested another, and that other a third, so he explained afterwards to the irate boss who paid for the time of them all. It was fortunate he was interrupted, John owned, for he had not gone halfway through his repertoire of the sort, and it would have been an hour, perhaps, before he finished.

I have stood with him, literally hours, at poultry shows, now on one foot and now on the other, while he descanted on points of

Silver Greys. Of Lippincott's birds he would talk, and of Henry Hales', and of Watson Westfall's, and of his own. Fortunately for the physical man of me he never at any one standing got upon both American and English breeders, but other hours, on the curb before Independence Hall, one of them, I have listened to him on the Silver Greys of Captain Phipps-Hornsby and Mr. Major. These weighty discourses involved the question of the relation of clay soils and chalk, of Somerset air and London smoke, to the vigor and coloring of the princely birds. Never did any part of me but the mere fleshly tire at these lectures. Such enthusiasm, such knowledge, such devotion could not but hold one.

One bitter Saturday, the day after Thanksgiving, I drove down toward Mason and Dixon's line to visit a confirmed fancier. He was not at home when I arrived, so his old wife piloted me out to the sheds, with the green mould of years upon them, that housed his eight breeds. He had birds of as recent an origin as Rose-combed White Orpingtons, birds as old as Dominiques. There were more cockerels than need be about. "It is hard to get him to kill the young roosters," she said. "I wonder," she went on, with a twinkle in her eye, "are you as bad? I often think this liking of fowls is like the drink. It gets hold of a man so it's just a habit. It isn't a business with him. It takes a business to pay for the fowls."

Perhaps I listened to my friend's much talk on Silver Greys because "the liking of fowls" is a "habit" with me. I shall never listen to his talk more. Nor shall I forget it, any more than I shall forget my last sight of his birds.

It was a soft day, a day out of an English winter rather than of ours. Rain was falling gently, and light mist rising from the ground, ground spongy in the February thaw. Once in the gate of the great place it was as if we were in an estate in Berkshire. A yew stood by the first of the houses we had to pass, and back of it the ground rose gradually, "landscaped" after the manner of a plantation. Round to the left we swung to a stable of aspect and arrangement that spoke of ante-bellum days. No one seemed to

be about, so I went on the hunt in all places likely and unlikely. Finally in a low-banked greenhouse I came on an old henchman half hidden between abutillons and a pittosporum. A low English holly spread against the southern bank of the greenhouse, and others of its kind, sheltered by the neighboring windbreak of shrubbery, added to the English feeling of it all. So intent on the old-world look of the place was I that I only half heard the complaints of the old man, as he led me toward the Dorkings. It was not his function to show them to us, so we waited in the stable until he hunted up another older henchman whose office it was. This old fellow, Irish though he was, had lived so long with the Friendly family he had taken on a port that was as Quakerish as theirs. He disapproved of the way the Dorkings were kept now their owner was gone, and rightly.

The fowls had gathered quickly enough at his calls, and stood there in the falling rain, a patient host of a hundred and fifty, dove-grey in general effect. The breasts of the few cocks among them were so splashed with the muck of the barnyard you had hardly known them black. In that grey day, in the rain that dabbed and drabbed them, the white hackles of the hens and the whiter top-feathering of the cocks were so inconspicuous they failed to relieve appreciably the dove-grey of the flock. The tails of all the fowls were down, and draggled; three or four cockerels were so pale of comb I judged them "going light"; and one and all showed they knew no longer a fostering care. The Quaker-visaged old henchman told us that the birds were fed only corn now, whole corn, and nothing else. They had no change of grain, he said, no bran, no beef-scrap, no sprouted oats, no cut hay. They had a roomy old shed to scratch in, dilapidated enough, but leaf carpeted, and a dry spot in which to roll and dust. There was a hole in the back of the shed that let them into a bit of woods. The houses, though, were poorly arranged, one back of the stable facing northwest, and another facing northeast. It was only constant and anxious care had made the Dorkings thrive here, and now that care was gone.

It was a sad thing, I thought, when a man's dead, and the day rainy, and the fowls he loved neglected and let run down, as these. It was all on my mind as we drove out again, and it still raining. I could not help thinking, so it is with each one of us one day sooner or later. What we care for most will be of no interest to others, and the weaknesses of what we tried to do, our failure to care as we should for what we love, apparent to any who pass by.

Spring bloom brought me happier thoughts when I next came by this way. Knowing well the situation of these Dorking sheds I stopped on the back road to see if I could pick them out at that distance. I could. The little trees my side the yard were white with blossom, plum blossom unquestionably. That "gallinacious establishment" belonged to the Eighteen-seventies, optimistic years in which it was believed hens would rid plums of curculio.

There was a sense of fittingness about the little plant, hens with breasts the color that is the red gage's when ripe, by trees whose blossoms were whiter even than their own hackles or eggs. Of the immaculateness of feather their owner had spoken to me whenever we met, and as often boasted of their whiteness of egg, and of their thirty-per-cent egg yield that cold December.

It had been this man's luck to go quickly. One day he felt as well as he had felt for years. The next day he was dead. Had he had time to think of what his death would mean, the loss to Dorkingdom, through his dropping out of the ranks, would have been one of his last worries. It had been a measurable part of his life, his fancy for Silver Greys, one of a dozen topics, maybe, he cared much to talk on. It had troubled him that Dorkings were not gaining in America. For all his fellowship with any friendly human, he was aristocrat enough to feel the distinction of breeding a fowl honored from old time and restricted to the few. Yet the satisfaction that was thus his did not compensate him for the realization that year by year there were fewer Dorkings in America. He felt about their diminishing numbers somewhat as he who was one of fifty per cent of his school to have Greek feels about that

school nowadays, with less than five per cent construing Xenophon or Homer.

There was no man now to uphold Dorkings, he told me in one of our last talks, as Henry Hales had upheld them in his long lifetime. I sometimes felt John Pym was dissatisfied with himself that he did not gird up his loins and go forth to battle for Dorkings as had that redoubtable oldster. John could not have done it. Nobody has. Nobody could. There has never been but one Henry Hales. I never met a Dorking man in America who did not speak to me of Hales, and that in the first pause in our conversation. That was not because he was the president of the Dorking Club. He was president of the Dorking Club because he was Henry Hales. Dorking men asked me if I knew him, simply because when one said "Dorking" one inevitably thought of him. During the quarter of a century that preceded his death in 1913 Henry Hales had been the champion of Dorkings in America, and not only that but the symbol of that England of yesterday from which they come to us.

As it chanced I was able to give a half-affirmative answer to this man's or that's question "Did I know Henry Hales?" even in those days before I had the grace to keep Dorkings. Mr. Hales was a corresponding member of a bird club I had joined when a boy in college, and so he was known to me as ornithologist earlier than as poultryman.

Goodness was to Henry Hales a twofold matter, a matter of morals and a matter of sport. He belonged to the England that holds fair play above all. In his native Norfolk his people were of the Church of England, so it was inevitable that he should be a vestryman. At Yarmouth, in his youth, he found Dorkings accepted as the fowl of fowls, so it was inevitable that, after whatsoever coquetting with Whitefaced Black Spanish and Seabright Bantams he was guilty of, he should become, at years of understanding, a Dorkingman.

Seven letters hold all my first-hand knowledge of him, most of them hardly more than a few lines, and all on business, but his

friendliness and openness of mind and his high-heartedness make themselves felt despite this restriction. He was eighty-two when he wrote them, and none too well, but they are patently unselfish and hospitable in spirit. All these letters were, as they say in England, "Re Dorking," some about Reds I was importing, others about eggs of Dorkings I was buying of him. Mr. Hales did not like the largest of the Dorkings called "Dark," but "Coloured." Nor had he liked the breeding of the variety away from the reddish hues they bore in his youth, into the largely black bird the standard of our day demands.

Dark Dorkings are the heaviest birds I have ever bred, cockerels ten months old weighing nine to eleven pounds. They look heavier, too, than taller breeds such as Light Brahmas, their only rival in weight that I have kept. The short legs and long keel and broad back, so characteristic of the Dorkings, contribute to the impression of bulkiness they convey. Yet for all they are strong fliers. The little bunch of three cockerels and four pullets I raised from eggs I had of Henry Hales took to roosting, after their chickenhood, on a pole about seven feet above the floor of an old barn. They went up to this as easily as if they were Games, though, of course, with more to-do. They would come in to the barn on a run and bouncing off the floor, fly with great clapping of wings straight to the pole, seldom making the shorter flight to the narrow dropping-board that was some eight inches lower. They were in every sense bouncing fellows, big and bouncing even to clumsiness, but saved from it by a buoyancy surprising in so solid-looking a bird.

I never thought them beautiful, their topfeathering of straw black ticked not harmonizing particularly well, to my eye, with the black of breast and belly and greenish-black of tail. I liked the hens better in their dark grey, black laced, and if they had had the old-time richness of red-brown in breast, to bring out the lacing, instead of the washed-out yellowy salmon of the modern standard, I would hold them handsome fowl.

Dark Dorkings hens have about them a heavy matronly dig-

nity, a kind of "mild and placid pride of increase," that appeals to the domestically minded. To others their self complacence is humorous or irritating as may be. Those with special knowledge of them know this port of theirs is not an outward symbol of inward grace. They do not, as it would indicate, increase and multiply and replenish the land. My Dark Dorkings were poor layers, the poorest of any hens I have kept, both Hales' strain and another off free range in New England. All that have to do with them tell me a like story. They lay few eggs and eggs surprisingly small for so large a bird. One eight-pound hen, in fact, could barely rival the eggs of Silkies a quarter of her size and weight. The value of the Dark Dorkings, of course, is on the table, where capons of them are tenderer than a South Shore roaster or a turkey poult of equal weight. They have been bred for abundance of breast meat, and they have responded to the breeding. That they could develop laying strains I have no doubt, just as Durham cattle, when the need was, developed a milking strain after a long ancestry bred only for meat.

I had known White Dorkings, and Silver Grey, and Dark Dorkings, before I had known one and twenty. I was nearly double those years when I knew Red Dorkings in the flesh. Presentments of Red Dorkings I knew. I could not escape them, any more than could any small boy who delighted in picture books. The Red Dorking stalked regally through the Mother Goose from which I learned my rhymes. I so pored over that book it was worn out before I lost joy in it. My children are lucky to have him, however, in a scrapbook their mother's less destructive youth has left in fair repair. He appears here in a series of chromos relating the sad story of Cocky Locky. In my uninitiate youth I thought of such cocks as Brown Leghorns, not knowing then the Red Dorking, and disregarding the white legs and five toes that made identification with a Leghorn impossible. The old processes did not reproduce the richness of the reds on shoulder and wingbow and saddle, or the luster of the blue-green on the wing coverts and wing, but the identification is in no doubt. The colors of those parts in the pic-

tures are intended as these reds and blue-greens, and the others are as they should be, orange-red of head and hackle feathers, black of breast, and greenish-black of tail, and whiteness of leg without blemish. There is no doubt, either, about the extra toe. It reaches up and out with the very curves of life.

You will find this same fowl on picture postcards the world over. It has come to be, somehow or other, the conventional cock to that type of artist who relies on tradition rather than on life. You will find the same Red Dorking, too, in present-day picture books. Such a book, with a brown and friendly horse on the cover, I picked up the other Christmas. It bore the name of a London publisher, but it was printed, like the post-cards, in Germany. As I turned over its pages in the toy store I came upon a hen labelled "Golden Dorking." She was of the burnished red-gold of a viking helmet, with blue legs and four toes, but intended to be the mate of my black-red cock. Him I found on the back of the cover, somewhat faded, with blue legs, too, and four toes, but with the long body of the breed.

In the old poultry books I have never found this Dorking called "Red," even when he is so described that he is unquestionably what we call today the Red Dorking. This is, I suppose, because until sixty years ago all Dorkings other than White were called "Coloured," and a considerable diversity in color allowed, the restriction being that all birds in a pen should match. The most popular variety up to the Eighteen-sixties seems to be the subvariety of Coloured Dorking known as the "Speckled" Dorking, a bird of the red and white and black you find in its descendent the Speckled Sussex. Of these Speckled Dorkings there were exhibited in 1853, relates old Dixon, "more than a hundred and twenty pens, with only nineteen of white." This was at Birmingham, the banner show in the England of mid-Victorian days.

There are not many of us in America that breed the Red Dorking. There never have been many, though it may well be that more of the Coloured Dorkings imported in the Forties and Fifties were Reds or Red Speckles than are specifically reported as such. When

the fancy turned all "Coloured" Dorkings to "Dark" Dorkings, the ruddiness had to be bred out. I have had correspondence with several who kept the ruddy type of Dark Dorking in America before the Civil War, and with a few who knew the Red Speckles before they came to America from the Kent or Sussex of their youth.

Only one letter has come to me, however, from a man native-born who knew my Red Dorking in his youth, the Red Dorking of black breasted red cocks, of solid breast, or spangled, and of hens of rich maroon black-spangled. This letter came, as might be expected, from Virginia, where if anywhere in America was a country life like that of Southern England. "In the fifties," my Virginian writes from the lower James, "my mother grew the Red Dorking, and would have no other. After her death, I went away teaching school and my brothers at the old home wandered away after strange gods and the Dorkings were sold to the market. Since that time I have not seen any of the old Dorkings." As years grew on him Dorkings he had to have, so he tried the Silver Greys, but they failed to be to him as were his old favorites. You may be sure I answered his letter fully. It could not have been discreetly, for I never heard from him again.

Even in England Red Dorkings were rare by the Sixties. Just why is not clear, for they were in great demand in the markets. There were higglers like John Palmer of Roke in Oxfordshire who preferred them for the London trade above all other of "the Dorking sort," save "the speckled blue and white." At least so testifies Mr. Herbert Atkinson in his "Last of the Old Higglers."

In the late Sixties Mr. Henry Hamlin found the Red Dorkings so scarce he feared they would become extinct. To guard against that, so far as one man could, he gathered a stock of them on his farm at Longfield in Surrey, and preserved them until his death. Then his sons took up the good work. Only one, unfortunately, has been successful in keeping his birds sturdy. Mr. A. Hamlin had but one hen and two cocks left in 1911, and Tunbridge Wells, he lamented to me in a letter, would soon no more know the Red

Dorking. Mr. Harry Hamlin is more fortunate, because of judicious outcrossing, I take it. Most of the breed now extant have in them blood of his strain.

It was not from Mr. Hamlin, however, I had my first birds, but from the Viscountess Malden. I was led to this stock of them, ultimately Mr. Hamlin's too, by an answer in *Poultry* to one "E. A. S., U. S. A.," who had inquired through the columns of this English journal for "a breeder of high-class Red Dorking fowls." At the time I read this I had been bent for over a year upon the possession of Red Dorkings, ever since, in fact, I had come to realize they were most like, of all modern fowls, to fowls alluded to in old writers. It had been a great day when I came to know that the "Great Kentish Hen" of Walton and the Dorking were one; and a rival to that day had been that other, close upon it, when I happened on Columella's choice of the Red Dorking as delectable beyond all hens. To these glad days had succeeded others less glad, too many and too sad almost to be chronicled, for inquiry on inquiry among the Dorking men of America had brought me no nearer to Red Dorkings in the flesh. Everyone who should have known where I might find them had told me there were none in this country now, and it was years since any had been shown in England. Some had gone further and issued discouraging pronunciamentos such as "extinct," or "as dead as the Jersey Blues."

You who have been slow to come on any trace of a long-sought trail well know how my heart blessed that unknown "E. A. S." for his letter; how *Poultry* seemed the most thrilling of papers; and how lyric to my ears sounded that address, "Mursley, Winslow, Bucks," where were the birds of my desire. My joy of this first glimpse of the trail to Red Dorkings, was as nothing, however, to that which was mine when the birds arrived on August 4, 1911,—a black-breasted red cock, a clay-wheaten hen, and a partridge hen. Everything about that coming was of good omen. Her ladyship had despatched them to me before my money reached her; some cook or steward had lavished tidbits on them throughout the

long voyage from London to Philadelphia, so that they were in the pink of condition after three weeks in a small crate; and training, or close quarters, or disposition had given them the habit of grouping themselves together like their sketches by Weir.

So propitious were all these circumstances that I didn't much mind the failure of the hens to show black spangles on a body color of deep maroon. That contrast I had been led to expect of them from the frontispiece of *Our Poultry*. This tome of Weir's, so monumental in bulk and learning, had heartened me many times during my long search for Red Dorkings. A breed that so kindled the admiration of one who knew all the kinds of poultry could not have been let die.

I did not then know, maybe Weir did not know when he painted the trio, that his putting of a black-breasted red cock with black-spangled hen was perpetuating the vice of double mating, that the cock with such hens should have had his breast flecked with their rich maroon, or that the hens with his black-breasted cock should have been either wheaten or partridge.

Later I was to import Red Dorkings more handsome by far than these first birds from Lady Malden, but no others had power to create in me such a "first fine careless rapture." How good was that cock's crow in the hot dawn of the morrow of his arrival! It was a sort of broken crow, but it spoke to me as the authentic voice of yesterday! To this day his descendants of the third and fourth generation crow with that very break of this first fellow's. It is as persistent a characteristic as indomitable spirit and sickle feathers that sweep through the full half circle. That morning after their arrival, too, the wheaten hen laid! It was a chalk-white egg, typically Dorking in that its pointed end was only less rounded than its butt. Four days later the partridge hen began to lay. I set the first seventeen eggs the two laid and on September eleventh hatched fifteen chicks. Fourteen I raised, nine cockerels and five pullets. Red Dorkings began well with me.

After this I imported a hen and cockerel from Rayleigh in Essex, better shaped birds, and better marked, replicas, indeed,

of two of a flock I had seen under straw-thatched walls of a barnyard we passed on our way back to Salisbury from Stonehenge. That picture had swum up again in memory on my first acquaintance with *Our Poultry*, and from time to time, during the years before the desire to possess Red Dorkings became irresistible; but even its partial realization in these two perfect birds fell short of the joy I had in those three first-come birds.

Eggs I imported, too, but I had few hatch. One setting that came straight through from Windsor produced no chicks, another from Rayleigh that had a week's rest in cold storage in New York produced three. My other importation of eggs was virtually a gift. I had exchanged letters with a fancier who lived by Windermere before I had ordered the eggs. He had advertised only to help others to fresh blood, and so to keep the breed rugged. He was interested in my case, that an American cared for a fowl so closely associated with what he called "old England, the old style, the old blood, the old ways!" So he put himself to expense and to trouble that I might have a good hatch.

The letter that preceded the eggs to America revealed how careful and thorough had been the dalesman's thought for their safe transportation. It told me that arrangements had been made with the purser of the ship in which the eggs were to go to have one of his stewards turn their case every day. This was, of course, to keep in their respective places all the elements within the eggs, and particularly to avoid the yolk, as the saying is, "sticking to the bottom of the shell." It told me, too, how to treat the eggs on their arrival. Their case proved to be a chest of oak, ironbound. When we lifted its lid, we found excelsior inside and within the excelsior a deal box. Within this inner box was excelsior again, and then three paper boxes containing the eggs.

From the moment of the chest's arrival until coming upon the eggs I was buoyant with hopes of a proper hatch. The moment the first egg was in my hand I feared the worst, and that worst was realized when, twenty-five days later, no chicks had hatched. That first egg, I saw at a glance, had moved both ways in its little com-

partment of strawboard. It had written on it, in lead pencil, the date it was laid and the name of the hen that had laid it. The pencil marks were blurred up and down, and sideways, too. The paper holders within the compartments had not been stiff enough to grip the eggs firmly. I let the eggs rest two days, as their sender directed, and then set them under four hens, nine eggs of the imported lot to a hen, and one from the home hens, to prove if the fault of failure, if failure there should be, lay with the far-travelled eggs, or with the setting hen. All four "clucks" were tried mothers, all four sat perfectly, three of the four hatched the tenth home egg. So shaken had been the eggs from Windermere, however, that only four of the thirty-six even started to incubate. I let all stay under the hens twenty-three days and then opened them. The germs in the four that had started to incubate had died so early in incubation that all four were rotten. The thirty-two others were as clear as infertile eggs. The treadles had been jarred loose, I suppose, and the vitality of the eggs thus destroyed.

It was a great disappointment to me to have no hatch, save from the three home eggs, and a still greater to have to send such bad news to one who had tried so hard to pass on to me his strain of the old-world fowl. I wrote him of the misfortune, but he never answered my note, and two following letters were returned to me, at a year's end, unopened. I am afraid that he thought it useless to make further attempts to help so poor a poultryman.

I wish I had kept the names pencilled on the eggs. I can remember only one name of these, although I remember that all had the right English ring. That name is Betty, and you may be sure that now, when I have at last perfectly marked pullets, breeding more than fifty per cent true to type, that not the least handsome is Betty Blank. I think, too, there was an Audrey. At any rate I always think of Audrey nowadays as an appropriate name for a Dorking pullet, and I do not understand why I so think, unless that name lingers in the back of my mind as a subconscious memory of pencilling on one of those thirty-six eggs. They were such hatchable

looking eggs, too, true Dorking type with both ends rounded, and evidently, from size and shape, hens' eggs, and not pullets'.

These eggs were of good girth, as most of those I have imported, but another strain I have of hens out of Essex lay eggs that, while rounded at both ends, are yet thinnish and long. Such eggs make me wonder, in moments of faith, if Herrick did not keep Red Dorkings. He writes

> . . . a Hen
> I keep, which, creeking day by day,
> Tells when
> She goes her long white egg to lay.

In this same poem, "His Grange, or Private Wealth," he writes of a cock he has "to sing how day drawes on." This keeping of a cock indicates, I take it, he had more hens than one, for one so countrywise as Herrick would keep no cock had he only one hen, unless that cock were a new-come acquisition waiting his turn on the table.

We know, too, that one hen, however "teeming," would not lay eggs enough to make those "Tarts and Custards, Creams and Cakes" he loves to descant on. He mentions no "cockrood" of his own, but he felicitates Endymion Porter upon his fowl-run of a quarter acre, and he may well have had another such tucked away in some snug corner about Dean's Prior. A country clergyman with Herrick's way must have had a gift now and then from some Julia or other, but surely I do not misread him when I say he would not have been content with an uncertain supply.

A Red Dorking pullet, as she is just about to lay her first egg, is the best roast chicken there may be. Herrick would have the best. Ergo, Herrick must have kept Red Dorkings. So long now I have dwelt on this thought that, without will on my part, a cockrood I associate with Herrick rises before me sometimes as in a dream. I see its low houses against a wall and Red Dorkings running before them, pullets and cockerels, old hens and cocks with full sickles. Close by is Trasy, to guard them against marauding men;

and that cat whose play he sings dozes sleepily on the wall top, eyes half opening now and then for sight of "miching mice." Prew calls, and the fowls come about her, nearest her the pullets, each plump as a cherry, and the Parson, looking on, smiles content, epicurean palate and tender heart touched as one by the prospect of such well being.

Where care
None is, slight things do lightly please.

It was from Red Dorkings that that other good king's man, Izaak Walton, took feathers for his "Ruddy-fly," so tempting a lure in May to the trouts he loved. "The feathers of a red capon—which hang dangling on his sides next to the tail" are those he advocated for this fly. The wings of his "yellow or greenish fly" are made of "the red cock's hackle or tail." "The red cock" might be a Game, but the "red capon" points to the Red Dorking, as Dorkings were in Walton's England as inevitably the birds of which to make capons as Light Brahmas are today on the South Shore below Boston.

They had not, in Walton's time, come to call the old five-toed and white-shanked fowls by our name of Dorking, for the little town of Dorking in Surrey had not yet become a "fattening center." It became such about midway the eighteenth century. Fowls "stuffed" for the London market at Boston in Lincolnshire came, in like fashion, to be known as "Boston fowls," and those similarly fattened at Waldron and Heathfield in Kent as "Waldron fowls" and "Heathfield fowls." It was Surrey and Sussex and Kent that, from the seventeenth century on, had sent most of the choicest roasters to the London market. It was but natural, then, that the county names came to be used to designate the variety of fowl "stuffed" and killed at this place or that in the counties given to poultry farming.

I have come upon the name of Dorking for the fowl of my choice at no earlier date than 1815, though its use by "Bonington Mowbray" in the first edition of his *Domestic Poultry* of that year

is the use of an accepted name. He would not call it "The Famous Darking Fowl" if it had not been for some time celebrated under the name of "Darking." Fifty years earlier I find birds, whose description proves them beyond doubt Dorkings, referred to as "Kent" and "Sussex" and "Surrey" fowls, and on back of that for a hundred years and more. After speaking, in his *Compleat Angler*, of 1653, of the several kinds of trout, "which differ in their bigness, and shapes, and spots, and color," Walton goes on to remark by way of analogy that "the great Kentish Hens may be an instance compared to other hens."

"Bonington Mowbray" was not Bonington Mowbray. He was John Lawrence. John Lawrence concealed his identity for reasons very like those that led Scott to conceal his as the author of *Waverley*. It was bad form, in the early years of the nineteenth century, for a gentleman to write a poultry book or a novel. Perhaps I should rather say that those born just short of gentility did not dare to risk either venture unless assured such books would win successes that would make them respectable despite their plebeian associations. John Lawrence had written books about horses without endangering his caste, but he was uncertain what would be said of him did he acknowledge his *Practical Treatise on Domestic Poultry*. Scott had, of course, acknowledged his poetry: that was as respectable as horses. Lawrence knew a man might write of Games and cockfighting, but poultry as producers of meat and eggs had been for years the concern of hen-wives. Then, too, the flesh of poultry was hardly, in popular estimation, a hearty man's food. It was a luxury surely, and more proper to invalids and women than to beef-eating Britons.

The old ghost was slow to be laid. A half century after Lawrence, poultry keeping had the proportions of an industry and the half-respectability of a "fancy." Yet even then a "fancy" was not regarded as on a par with a true sport. That equality is only now fully recognized.

I have wondered whether this old prejudice as to the effeminacy of poultry keeping is what kept the old astronomers so chary of

putting our barnyard fowls into the sky. There we shall find Dove and Swan, Crow and Toucan, Crane and Goose, Eagle and Owl, Phoenix and Bird of Paradise. We must turn to folklore to find the Pleiades called "Hens and Chickens"; the old atlases of the heavens do not know them as such. These stars were still toward the zenith and their highest seven but a little dimmed when I was born. I wonder what had been my enthusiasm over fowls had I been born when these stars were in their fullest brilliancy. It is perhaps well that this enthusiasm is not greater, for as things are, it is of an intensity my friends sometimes find it difficult to bear.

It may be because of Peter that fowls were so long held in less than proper regard. Some of the obloquy that hung over his memory may have extended to the bird whose crowing was herald of his denial of his Lord. In England cock and hens had a bad name as prophets of evil of another sort. When fowls stirred in the night, and cackled or crew, it was said that the Danes were coming. And this saying is still prevalent in countrysides where Danish ancestry is undistinguished from ancestry of any other English strain.

It is not easy to account for this continual association of barnyard fowls and Danes. There is no doubt the cock was to them, as to other men, a bird of portent, but it does not seem of more significance to them than to other men. Yet it is true that I have found no others than Northmen using the cock as symbol so thrillingly. "The red cock is crowing over the roof of the house" is a fine saying of theirs. Can you not see at those words the flames thrust and spire above the ridgepole? "The red cock" is fire. That is why red is the royal color for fowls. It symbolizes fire, the good friend, the fell enemy of man. That is why the cock, in copper or brass, swings as weathervane over more barns and houses than does horse or cow, why it rivals there the arrow, that, like itself, being fire, is proof against the flames or the forked javelins of lightning.

I know no other fine saying than this about the cock. Even the goose has higher place in traditional repute, in loved phrase. What

would be the ballads without "grey goose feather?" What folklore and romance without their delectable goose-girls?

Fowls have been too familiar, maybe, to appeal to the imagination. The prosaic and humble alone have wanted to be their laureates. I have had letters lyric with praise of Dorkings and objurgation of nightingales that disturbed the quiet in which that praise was pondered. I have had a correspondent "Re Dorking" so honest and thorough that he doubly listed for me the leading breeders of one variety. He arranged them all once, as gentle, as misters, as plain John Smiths. He arranged them again as wholly trustworthy, as fairly dependable, as unreliable. All classes of the second listing contained names from all classes of the first. This correspondent was one of three of mine in England over ninety years old.

Another of this trio is responsible for the poetic fragment of a "standard of excellence" that follows. It was in the handwriting of his son who wrote that I would perhaps pardon his father for not writing himself when I learned that he, the son, was sixty-eight:

"The Red Dorking Hen should be red-laced, and spangled with a rich, deep greenish-black, a picture in itself to look at and admire. I remember over forty years ago seeing some rose-combed Red Dorkings. At first I thought they were Red-caps, but noticing their white legs and the abnormal fifth toe, I knew them to be the old Kentish Red and Black Spangled Dorkings. And how I passed and repassed these birds, thinking of the Eighth Commandment, as they were not for sale, is still a memory of the past."

This was one whom Walton would have praised, "A honest man, now with God." He loved "old England, the old style, the old blood, the old ways." All such, if they keep fowls, will keep some of the old stocks, Scotch Greys or Dumpies, Pit Games or Pheasant Fowl, Redcaps or Dorkings. And all such, even if they do not keep fowls, will recognize on sight any of these breeds as belonging to the yesterday they treasure in their hearts. They are by no means all Englishmen, or even but newly American. The

puritan himself will sport back to the country squire. This has been proven to me more than once, but never more conclusively than one day of late summer in an interval of the White Mountains where nothing but the rich speech of the few natives suggested Old England.

As I went out to feed the hens late one afternoon, I saw the Spaldings, father and son, coming down Currier Road. I had not seen them, perhaps, but for the sunset. Yellow light, breaking out wildly from under grey clouds low over Whiteface, drew my glance that way. Heads down to the wind these good chums were ploughing on doggedly eastward. Ten minutes later I came from behind the house to find the two in the road, lost in contemplation of the fowls. What are an east wind and rain threatening, what three miles of lonely road ahead and night at hand, to true fanciers? Only I had not before now known them as such. "We had just decided," said the father, "that you got them off an old print. We've often seen chickens like them in scenes of a paddock the hounds and horsemen are crossing after a fox." He was right. Red Dorkings belong with foxhounds, mellow-voiced, and with huntsmen redfaced and redcoated. With sight of Dorkings one cannot help thinking of old prints, and old writing as well, old writing about Old England. Such places as Evelyn delighted in describing come back to me: pleasaunces and bowling greens beloved of peacocks; espaliers and orangeries, centuried grapes and pears, muscadines of pale amber and melting bergamots; cotes and columbariums of white and cooing doves; pastures with Durhams up to their knees in grass, fat fellows of roan, and of a roan and white flea-bitten with red.

There is no doubt, I think, but that the Red Dorking takes one back further through the years than any other of his race. It is not only that he is oldest in the records, but that he looks the part that history gives him. It stirs the imagination when, looking at him, one thinks his kind may well have been brought to England by the legionaries of Caesar. I can therefore understand why the Quaker doctor from Skaneateles was interested in Red Dorkings. He had

known Dorkings and Roman things else in his Kentish birthplace. There his father kept going to meeting when there were only two other members to sit with him in silence, or to listen to the third should the spirit move one to speak. The son of such a father holds fast to old ways. The gentleman from Virginia, my correspondent, fancied Red Dorkings because his mother had fancied them. I can understand, too, why Lord Grey de Ruthyn sought them out for his frontier ranch at Round Up. Rose-combed birds had been better for Montana winters, but long lineage in the poultryman leads naturally to long lineage in the poultry. But why does the station agent in newest Washington keep them? Why the manufacturer of metal caskets in Oneida? Why did Homer Davenport choose them as the fowls to turn to from his caricatures of contemporary America? As says my neighbor in Sandwich, these are of the more than four things too wonderful for me.

1918.

·THE RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET·

THE ruby-crowned kinglet drifts into our orchard trees in the rare days of early April. Here his little companies busy themselves among the bare twigs, for two weeks, or three maybe, their happiness bubbling up in song when the day turns sunny and kind; and then they pass on to the northern spruce forests, leaving all who heard in wonder at such warbling. Those who have not traced it to the little master are in wonder why notes so sweet, so interwoven and varied, have not won their singer a fame that makes him known of all men; and those who know him are in wonder that they do not make more of the song, that it has not lingered in their memory and send them afield all expectancy to hear it.

Maybe the song of the ruby-crown has not come home to us more closely because it is, after all, a song of so little power, though of surprising volume for so small a bird. It is not comparable, for instance, in brilliancy or volume or carrying quality, to the song of that other diminutive fellow, the winter wren, if it is finer in tone and of a deeper suggestion. Nor is there in us when "kinglet" is said, or "ruby-crown," that emotional stir there is in us when "wren" is said. The very name of the bird, "wren," weighted with who can say what traditional feeling, deepens the impression the song itself makes. Did all of us know the kinglet akin to old-world nightingale and blackcap no doubt we would all more appreciate its song.

Perhaps the boy who has grown up hearing this song of the ruby-crown, day in and day out all summer long, in the spruces above the appled valley of the Gaspereau, may have associations with it that make it not only a surpassing song, but the very symbol of the most heartfelt things. There in Nova Scotia, I, too, have

met the kinglet, but not to know him otherwise than we all know him hereabouts. To us of the Delaware Valley, I am afraid, the ruby-crown is little else than singer, though he has while with us engaging, confidential ways, that, upon familiar acquaintance, would, I should think, lead to a regard somewhat like that in which we hold the chickadee. In my experience, at least, the ruby-crown is more a door-yard bird on his short stay with us than the golden-crown in his long stay. This is, perhaps, because the rigors of winter drive the golden-crown to thick woods, whereas the blue and silver weather in which the ruby-crown visits us in April, and the golden days of October when he revisits us on his way South, allow him to forage where he will.

I am not sure it is not in his October sojourn that I care most for the ruby-crown. Though I have in more instances heard him sing in the spring, and heard him then sing more freely than in the autumn, I have treasured his song the more at the latter season, because he then had fewer rivals. In the autumn, too, I hear him more intimately, less often in high woods-trees and more often in the low pear-trees about my house, although I must confess that, both spring and fall, I hear him very often in these dooryard trees —very, very often while I am yet abed. Just outside my window is a Catherine pear. This is peculiarly attractive to the ruby-crowns, and many a time I am roused by one singing from it, to spot him there as I hang out of the window a little after sun-up and drink in his golden numbers and the fresh morning air. Oftener, as I recall such episodes—and so, too, my notes say—it is the mellow air of an early Indian summer I drink in on such occasions, than the sharp air of April.

In the Catherine, and in the Bartlett and Sheldon and ungrafted Hedge-pear its neighbors, the ruby-crown company will sometimes delay for as long as the little while I may watch them. Again they are but flitting through, less restless than warblers but as quick to pass by. Not one minds my spying upon him, letting me approach within a few feet as he hangs, chickadee-fashion, from the extremity of some low limb. His bright eye is always upon me,

however, and at every other move he lisps out his little call and flutters his wings. At intervals one of the company will half puff up his crest, and sometimes, indeed, other of his feathers, transforming his natty self into a semi-dishevelled fluff of gray green. With their feathers sleeked down the ruby-crowns are brighter in color, dull olive-green on back and buffy on breast. The two white wing-bars are always conspicuous, but you spy about a bit before your eye falls upon the bright crown of the male. No sooner have you distinguished it, however, than the bird will toss himself off somewhere into the reddening leaves, to reveal his whereabouts in a trice, maybe, by his song.

It is to still autumn days that the rich little song of the ruby-crown is attuned, though then it is as often but half-uttered, or warbled under breath, as warbled out in its thrilling fullness. One sunrise of suffused red through woods of crisped leaves, and over lawns whitened by frost, heralded in my hour of hours with ruby-crowns. A half dozen of the little fellows bubbled into song one after another from this pear-tree and that. You might think all that splendor of sun-dazzle would have been dwarfing to so little songs. Yes, it was, in a way, but after all, such a sunrise was less unusual in my experience than so many ruby-crowns in song. So its wonder passed quickly, and the wonder of the little songs held on and on. For an hour, it seemed, the songs filled the air, another beginning almost as soon as one had ended, and, sometimes, one song overlapping another. It was a feast in song, and a flow of soul without surfeit.

1910

·A FAREWELL TO TORTOISES·

TORTOISES were treasure-trove to me in boyhood. They were as precious as any gold unearthed could have been. At sight of one there was that in my eyes which was as the ring of gold to the ears. There was no one of them at all but went in bravery of gold, not, of course, of gold alone, but of gold dominant over what other color the shell bore, its black or its brown. For all their humble ways, their slow waddling, and their drawing of head and legs and tail within the shell, there was a something rare and strange about them.

My feeling about the box-tortoise must have grown, I suppose, from my reading of tortoise-shell combs, or of jewel-cases of tortoise-shell, or of tortoise-shell inlay in Roman furniture. I had no desire to have anything made out of the shells of the tortoises I found. All I wanted was to have the living animals in a pen that I might watch their ways and gloat over their richness of color. I must have come to ten years of age before I could forbear from carrying home every one I found. I met them in those old days wherever I wandered afoot on the Wissahickon Hills. I met them wherever we drove, whether along Wissahickon or back into country that was drained by Wingohocking or Pennypack.

At one time I had eight tortoises, the exact number of my screech owls, than which, however, they were much less trouble to feed. In late fall the tortoises sunk themselves in the earth, and did not reappear until the frost was out of the ground in spring. With such habits they took themselves off my hands for more than a third of the year. They would eat vegetable food, too, and from the time tomatoes were ripe until the tortoises began to hibernate I fed them largely on the fruit so prodigally borne. I fed the tor-

toises meat, too, raw meat, but only to vary their vegetable diet. They ate cold boiled potatoes, too, and apples and pears, and snails and roaches and some sorts of worms.

Possibly the tortoises did not have enough to eat at times, but as they can fast a long while without apparent hurt and as they most of them, sooner or later, dug out of the quarters I provided for them, I had very few of them die on my hands. One that did die, after coming out of hibernation, I put by an ant-hill, and had eaten out cleanly by its inhabitants before June was over. This dome of gold and brown shell I cherished greatly, and it was, indeed, a bright and heart-warming object, as beautiful to me as her perfume-box of East Indian chelidon to Poppaea or any other pampered lady of imperial Rome.

I doubt if there is a wild tortoise nowadays anywhere along the Wissahickon. By a wild tortoise I mean one that was hatched from an egg laid on these hills, and grown to maturity here. Once in a long while I come on one shuffling away through the leaves, but I always doubt if he has been here for long, and I always foresee for him a short freedom from captivity. There are too many people in all places likely and unlikely in the park for so slow a traveller to be able to maintain himself here in numbers large enough to insure the perpetuation of his kind.

In most parts of the Wissahickon Hills the tortoises are safe from the automobiles that kill so many of the race along the country pikes. It is the curious and prying picnickers that carry off every tortoise they come upon, and make restocking a failure. Twenty-five years ago the box-tortoises would make their way on to my place's acre of ground. One or two would be about a day or a week several times during the summer, but they never, so far as I knew, laid their eggs here. Like so many places else on the Wissahickon Hills, this was part of their regular stamping ground. It is ten years now since one has visited us. It is three years since I came on one just across the way, where the places run back to the preserved reaches of the park. That last chap was no more than three inches long, and unwontedly flat for a box-tortoise.

If he is still in the land of the living he is, I fear, a child's pet, and, I hope, cherished out-of-doors. So many tortoises in my youth were put into the cellar, to keep down the snails. In the cellar, however, they sometimes flourished, for in that remote day there was generally an earthen floor in some cold corner where the tortoise could hole comfortably for the winter. I have known one to survive in vigor in such quarters for several years, and to waddle off high-heartedly when given his freedom.

It is not often you can accord the tortoise more than the appeal of the grotesque. And yet, I think, I shall never forget a company of three tortoises I saw one afternoon of early May. They were on an open hilltop of green moss and grey ledges. They were, I take it, a wedded pair, and an intruding bachelor. At any rate one was at a safe distance from the two at rest, and that one walking about on tiptoe, with an almost bacchanal leer in his eye. About them, in the moss, were pink ladyslippers, growing dispersedly, a dozen of them at least in full bloom. It was a little set unusual in my experience, fresh, semi-grotesque, Jappy. Green moss about grey ledges, goldy tortoises on the green moss, and nearby the pink-pouched flowers nodding stiffly in the wind—that was a combination I had not come upon before. Over all fell the wild light of spring, light from a low sun, light broken by the thin trunks of a stand of second-growth oaks, and dappling tortoises and moss, orchids and ledges, with a shifting play of gold and brown, a transfiguration *in excelsis* of the very colors of the grotesque trio.

1929

VIII

For SAMUEL F. HOUSTON

neighbor on the hills these many years . . .

Of SPRING-HOUSES, GROUND-CELLARS *and* "CAVES"

THERE are those to whom the spring-house is only the prison of a spring. It is other than that to me, but I cannot deny there is justice in such a belittling view. The sand may jet up, the detractors hold, and the water may wimple as in free springs, but the light that makes half their beauty is all but shut out by walls and roof. You may not see reflected here sky and trees and teetering snipe, and the water's life seems gone by its cabining.

Once free from its service of cooling and keeping milk, however, the water that feeds the spring-house will often slide along into pools that are very like the parent spring was once; and age often so blends the little house into the hillside, or situation so composes it into the group of farm buildings beyond, that the landscape is no loser by its presence. Even when it is not beautiful, the spring-house compensates by bringing before the mind images of dairying, that has still about it, at least on the lesser farms, some of the associations of a simpler age than ours, if not of the old country. Because of its usual isolation the spring-house is the most individual of the small offices about the farm, developing of itself and not through the necessities of a fellow building.

No man, farm-born, but has keen interest in them all, but when the exile in the city comes home you will find him wandering down to the spring-house as soon as he has whistled out the dogs

and run over the stock in the barn. If it is a Pennsylvania farm, fully appointed, that calls him, it will boast nearly a score of little buildings, all interesting in the old days, that he might have chosen to revisit. Around the barnyard, so as to leave a protected square for the cattle, will be grouped pigsties, sheepfold, cow-sheds, pump-house and workshop; back of the barn will be engine-house, silos, milking stalls and covered ricks; nearer the house and maybe forming roughly another hollow square will be corn-cribs, hen-house, duck-pen, carriage house and woodshed; just back of the house will be oven, summer-kitchen, and ground-cellar, with the more modern ice-house in near neighborhood. On the edge of the orchard will be the apple-butter shed.

Akin to one or another of these, but not of them, is the spring-house. Nine times out of ten it is apart, outside of the homeyard, and, often, for all the house was built to be handy to the spring, a good hundred yards away. Again and again you will find the spring-house dug into the bank where ends at a meadow the rise on whose side the farmhouse is built.

Old willows lean over the spring-house; or a great buttonwood, with branches white as the whitewashed walls below, lifts a hundred feet straight up; or a gnarled red-maple drops a half-broken branch on the shingled roof as a bridge for the flying squirrels from their storehouse in the eaves to their homes in the hollow limbs. It may be the squirrels' twilight antics that take the man's feet where the boy's have trod, his memory failing him as to whether they hibernate or not, and so will be about or asleep this wintry eve. Or it may be memories even more trivial that lead him on, perhaps only a curiosity to see whether the spring-house trout is like the spring-house trout he used to know.

On many farms they still keep a trout on the dip-hole for old time's sake, and if sober folks' word is to be believed, the fish so circumstanced live as long nowadays as they used to do. At my grandfather's farm the old trout was so tame he would come up to be fed and rubbed when the girls came to pan the milk. All I heard speak of him agreed to that. About his weight, however,

they were not unanimous. I have heard my uncles wax eloquent for one another's benefit, as only those who are brothers and fishermen can, upon the important question of whether he was a two pounder or three pounder. To this day I am not sure about that. Now the neighbors thereabout must go far for trout, but wherever trout are and spring-houses in a countryside, the good old custom remains. It is good luck as well as fitting and proper, in regions as far apart as the valleys of the Ohio and Saco, to have trout in the dip-hole.

In western Pennsylvania I know boys who spend hours along mere runnels of brooks deep in the mountains in the hope of getting a big fellow to rival those of the neighbors' spring-houses. Exultation beyond that from any fishing I ever heard recounted, I listened to and beheld as one of these boys told me how he caught an eighteen-inch fellow in a home-made net fashioned out of a spruce bough whose branches were bound into meshes by spruce roots. His eyes kindling, his lips smacking, his voice triumphant, he told me that when he got the fish home and compared him with the neighbors', he found him three inches longer than any in the valley's spring-houses. To know that he had the biggest fish outweighed all his trouble in getting it, his hours of vigil, his fall and wetting in catching the sockdolager, his fear of the game warden who would object to this method of capture, long established though it was, and practised before his day by the boy's uncle and grandfather.

In my father's spring-house, built in the days of ice chests and hygiene, as a cover for the spring and that only, no trout were permitted, but we could not keep out the newts. One of these, a little longer than my finger and of burnt orange black-spotted, was the most excitingly beautiful life of its inches I have ever seen. No redstart or Blackburnian warbler could thrill me as this little fellow with his fiery litheness. I was not young enough at the time of his invasion of the spring-house to have the pleasure in him I should have had had he appeared a few years earlier when the spring-house was a daily haunt of mine. The newts that abounded

there those times were all of pale yellows and dull browns and a bit sluggish when I stirred them about as I lay prone on the cool flagstone that was the house's floor, and dabbled hands and wrists in the cooler water. It was a good place on hot noons of July and breathless August evenings, a place of refreshment and heartsease, and to this day I carry with me the sound of its water gurgling out under the flag, and the lisp of the wind in the willows above and about.

Start your friends who are country-born on the subject of spring-houses and reminiscences in rich store will rush in upon you. To one they are suggestive of home days in childhood when he kept his mother apprehensive of his health and her cream by insisting upon playing in the spring-house when it rained; to another the spring-house is recalled as a place dreaded because of disliked butter-making and still drearier washing of greasy cans; to another the spring-house rises in memory as a place of orgies upon watermelons chilled in the cold water; to another it returns as the scene of initiation into the mysteries of Julep, whose concoction was suggested by the mint that grew close by; to almost all spring-houses come back as the inns of byways, because on back-country walks kind hands have given from them drink to quench thirst and food to ease hunger.

Milk and butter are not all the spring-houses safeguard. I have been ushered into one so sweet of strawberries cooling that I wondered all the milk did not taste of their ambrosia; and into another where dough for pie-crust was cooling that it might be rolled thin. If we are to believe Peter Kalm, he found all Pennsylvania of the mid-eighteenth century, Swede, English, and German, given to the use of them for the cooling of liquors, but in these less hearty days I have never found one put to such use.

The earliest records of spring-houses in America that I know of are from Pennsylvania, but they existed in greater or less number in some form in all the seaboard communities. With the spread of easterners westward they have been carried to all parts of the United States, note of one coming to me even from Sitka. They

were not always and everywhere called "spring-house," and they are not always so called today. "Milk-house" was at one time almost as usual a name, and in New Hampshire and Indiana and Georgia I have found it still surviving.

In North Carolina the building that serves as does the spring-house is more nearly the English dairy. One a friend of mine lived by was a little brick building set by the well so that water could be pumped into the floor troughs in which the milk-pans rested. Fresh water was introduced as the day's temperature demanded.

English dairies are sometimes situated as was this one, but in all I have record of in which water-cooling is used, the troughs, of tiling in the old buildings and cement in the new, are bench high from the floor, so that the milk may be more easily handled. Sometimes the pans rest on the trough floor as they do in all our old spring-houses, but oftentimes the trough has a wooden or marble covering with holes cut in it to receive the pans. The water is more often piped into English dairies than it is into our spring-houses, and sometimes it is even laboriously carried there. The typical English dairy of old type, however, has no water trough in it, the milk bowls resting on shelves or on the stone floor of the dairy, which is apt to be sunk a few feet into the ground. England's cooler July and August makes water cooling less necessary than do our intensely hot months, but a love of sour milk, to be found in Britons as far separated as Kent and Kerry, tells a tale of what happens in many a dairy.

The spring-house was, of course, possible as a feature of the countryside only where springs were plenty. When they were few and far between, but frequent enough for anyone to know of spring-houses, some adaptation of the principle of the spring-house was made in dairy or well or ground-cellar, if it was the custom thereabouts to keep the milk outside of the farmhouse. In many communities it was not, and, the Atlantic slope over, it is probable there are more farms on which the milk used to be cooled in cellar or closet than in any outside building. Such was the practice in many parts of the old countries from which our

ancestors came, both of Great Britain and Germany, and of France, too. A closet in the solid stone of a northwest wall is a cool place even in August, and the typical "cellar-hole," as it is locally called in Pennsylvania, is even cooler. This "cellar-hole" often opened off the cellar well that was so constant and unhygienic a feature of our old Germantown houses, but more usually it was simply a shelved six-foot depression in the cellar floor, with steep steps down into it. Out of use as these "cellar-holes" were in my youth, they were not always floored over and I have had more than one bad tumble into such traps in those cellar hunts and explorations that are so characteristic a part of the small boy's days.

In New England where spring-houses are not so usual as in the Middle States and Virginia and Ohio, I have found the milk and butter sometimes kept on shelving just inside the well-head, or in a bucket let down to the water's surface. More commonly, however, I have found the cellar the place of such storage. I have found the well so used elsewhere than in New England. From Alabama, for instance, where the spring-house is rare, I have word of milk being kept in a long tin bucket of very narrow diameter let down until it almost touched the water.

Along the tide-creeks of the New Jersey coast I have known the milk to be kept in roofed-over shelving placed in dense shade. This shelving, elevated on table-like legs some three feet above the ground, was open, save for the screening at the sides, that the wind might draw through. Curiously this arrangement was called the "cave," as the "ground-cellar" or "arch" of our Pennsylvania hill country is called with more appropriateness. Not very unlike this Jersey arrangement, save that it is boarded down to the ground, is the milk-house of the district of broad-shingled old houses back from Point Judith in Rhode Island. It is simply a little shed, screened at its openings under the eaves, and situated in a cool spot.

In no part of our country will you find so many spring-houses as in Pennsylvania between the Appalachians and the Delaware.

It is a country abounding in springs, a country of intense heat in summer, and a country of so much native richness of soil and so skillful farming that each day of the harvest months there is an excess of produce to preserve until market day. The introduction of creameries and the modern methods of handling milk that is to be shipped to the cities have to a large degree taken away from the spring-house its old functions, but on some farms its use is still as it always was and in others its use is great, though it is a changed use. I know of old spring-houses remodeled to meet the new demands. The depth of water is increased to hold the large cans in which the milk goes to creamery or town until it is time to send them off.

The ice chest, also, has contributed to the decline of the spring-house, as has, too, the artesian well and the introduction of running water into the farmhouse, so that on many farms the spring-houses are falling into disuse and decay. The situation, too, of many has led to their abandonment. On farms on which hygiene rules, the spring-house has been found too near barnyard and house, and on others, on which the system of work has been well organized, the spring-house has been found too remote for profitable use.

These latter spring-houses are those that today tempt me to linger by them in cross-country trips. They are often situated in little oases of the farm that have been left wild from old time that their water might be pure. One I pass sometimes, near a backroad below Perkiomen, is tucked away in a bankside with five white oaks above it. It is fast reverting, all of it, lichened walls and mossed roof of shingles, to the colors and aspects of field and stones and tree-boles about it. It has known no whitewash now, within or without, for years, and the very path to it is lost in the close sward. What white is about it now is the white of the fleecy bloom of shad-bush in April from shrubs that have crept back against its walls since the farmer has ceased to feel that his brush-hook must make all about it trig and trim. And the only feet that have found their way into the turfed depression that was its path are those of the farm help once in a long time fencing or ploughing

in this remote corner, or those of the infrequent April walker or November gunner dry from hot cross-country work. No trace is anywhere about of a house site, and one wonders why it was built here until, in exploration of the farm, he finds it is the only surface water on the place. One's wonder then is, why the farmhouse was built so far from the spring. Topography and roads fail to give the answer, but I have no doubt, there was in that eighteenth century, when farmhouse and spring-house presumably were built, a good and sufficient reason which present-day conditions on the farm do not explain.

There have been spring-houses in Pennsylvania from the very earliest days of its settlement by Europeans. We do not need the existing historic records to know that. After one Pennsylvania summer men must have been driven to building them. No doubt the earliest spring-houses were of logs, as are two I know today, in places a hundred miles apart, in the lowlands by Mason and Dixon's line, and in the highlands of Pocono. When Kalm noted spring-houses, however, at the middle of the eighteenth century, stone was apparently a common material for their construction.

Visiting his friend and countryman Peter Koch, of upper Germantown, the Swedish naturalist came upon one he delighted to record: "Mr. Cock had a fine spring near his house. It came from a sandy hill and afforded water enough constantly to fill a little brook. Just close to this spring Mr. Cock had erected a building from those above-mentioned glittering stones (mica-schist) into which were put many jugs and other earthen vessels full of milk; for it kept very well in cold water during the great heat with which the summer is attended here." He continues "I afterward met with many houses which were situated like this and therefore were destined to keep the meat and milk fresh." That some of our spring-houses were very like the English dairies is revealed by his further note that "Pennsylvania abounds in springs, and you commonly meet with a spring of clear water on one or the other, and sometimes on several sides of a mountain. The people near such springs use them for every purpose of a fine spring water.

They also conduct the water into a little stone building near the house, where they can confine it, and bring fresh supplies at pleasure. In summer they place their milk, bottles of wine and other liquors, in this building, where they keep cool and fresh. In many country houses the kitchen or buttery was so situated that a little rivulet ran under it, and had the water near at hand."

There are many old houses, especially in the "Dutch counties," in which a little stream of water is still carried through the cellar in a trough, in which the milk pans are set. This water is not always from a spring, however, and I have heard of instances in which, during floods, such channels led torrents of water—from a mill race, in one case—into the cellar, endangering the foundations of the house.

Two-storied spring-houses are to be found through all the range of the spring-house. In the older settled portions of the country this upper story, if it contained but one room, was generally the smoke-house, though in some cases it was used for butter-making. Butter-making, however, was more commonly accomplished in the shed that in many instances projected porch-like before the door of the lower room. In some spring-houses the upper room was given over to the "hired man," and often, if there were two rooms in the second story, you might find his family there with him. The two second-story rooms are generally found in a spring-house built on a bank, one over the spring itself and the other on the bank into which the spring chamber was dug. I have seen the two rooms attained by placing one above the other, usually a very unpicturesque construction.

One three-story spring-house that I know is, however, not without picturesqueness, because of the roof, broad and steep pitched, that sweeps out over the second-story porch. It is homey, too, with its neatly curtained garret windows and its two chimneys suggestive of warmth within. That suggestion the house needed the thawing winter day I passed it in Butter Valley, for only in summer do spring-houses really invite. And yet, as a matter of fact, their water in severe weather is often less cold than the air

without, and despite their dampness they seem hospitable places, snug and down out of the wind as they often are.

This bank spring-house of Butter Valley with its two second-story rooms and spacious garret is the largest true spring-house I know. All houses built over springs are not necessarily spring-houses, but only those in which the functions of the spring outweigh those of the upper story or stories. Indeed there are countrysides in Pennsylvania in which cellar springs are almost as common as water wells in old houses in Germantown. One such old house of a score and more rooms is Pennell Manor, in the Quaker belt of Bucks County. Its spring chamber extends for fully forty feet under the porch, with whose twelve feet of width it corresponds. This chamber you can enter either from the cellar or from an entrance down steps at the porch end. It is a feature of the house, this cellar spring, but you do not carry the house in memory as a spring-house.

On the large dairy farms of southeastern Pennsylvania the typical spring-house, to be found on all of them a generation ago, is only one-storied, but divided into two rooms. Such a house is about thirty feet long and about twelve feet wide. The relative size of the two rooms is by no means constant in these houses. Some of them are divided into rooms of equal size, but again one room or the other will be larger. In my experience I have generally found the outer room in which the churning was done the smaller, and the inner room in which the cans and pans rested in the water the larger. Some of these spring-houses boast a chimney which leads from a fireplace in the outer room, or from a fireplace in the shed in front of the outer room. After the advent of creameries in this neighborhood, many of the farmers knocked out the partition between outer and inner rooms and extended the water troughs all the way to the door, leaving only a board or brick or stone walk down the middle of the house. Or perhaps you will find the front room still used in summer as a churning room and in winter as a store-house for turnips and beets. In the winter these "folks"

will make their butter in the out-kitchen, where, too, or in the cellar, the milk will then be kept.

In one two-roomed spring-house that I knew, the inner room was about twelve feet square with a square platform of flags surrounded left, back, and right with water. The water part was paved with brick so that the milk pans and butter crocks might have an even bottom to rest upon. The troughs at left and back were twice as wide as that upon the right. This narrower trough carried the water out through the outer chamber, whence it was piped to the pond below. In the inner room was only one window. In the churning room, which was about eighteen feet long, there were seven windows, but as all were small paned, there was not the flood of light in the dairy that such a number, arranged advantageously, three together on either side and one in the end, would lead you to expect. Under these windows a shelf ran around three sides of the room. As you entered, just before you on your left was the bench for pans and crocks, and just to your right the boiler with the fireplace underneath. The churn stood at the end of the room to your left and opposite it by the door to the inner room was the table where the butter was salted and moulded. Outside the spring-house, on the wall facing east, was a broad shelf where the pans were dried in the sun. Here the children loved to play and pry about, finding dead "white-heads" on the ground below the thick pine shelf, in the soft wood of whose underside the bumblebees delighted to drive their shafts. All spring-houses and their neighborhoods are places predestined to play, but this particular spring-house, between pasture and cedared slope, added to the usual attractions a pond just below, a pond in which great Muscovy ducks paddled about and from which you might entice "minnies" and "sunnies," sometimes a catfish, and on a red-letter day a chub.

Ponds are not infrequent below spring-houses in Pennsylvania. In the days before railroads made salt-water fish available, and the fresh-water fish were the homestead's only resource, ponds were present on all great country places and on many farms. Spring water, of course, is very cold, but it was not difficult to so

arrange the pond that only enough of the water habitually found its way through it to keep it fresh. There was such a pond once below the cellar-spring of Pennell Plantation, but the great willow that leaned over it now shades only a little marsh of luxuriant cress.

Across the way from where I write there is still the old pond below the spring-house and almost under the windows of the dwelling itself. It is so small it could never have been a breeding pond, if indeed it has not always been too cold for any fish but trout. In late years, however, trout have not thriven there, even when they managed to escape the king-fishers and night herons and minks that considered the pond stocked for their benefit. It was probably used by its eighteenth-century builders as riverside dwellers use the fish-box tied to the landing before their door, as a place to keep the surplus of catches until such time as they were needed for food.

This spring-house whose interior arrangement I have described in some detail had been rebuilt at least once, in Civil War times, and by that rebuilding had lost some of its picturesqueness. Its new boarded end, brown painted, did not fall into the color scheme of its countryside, as did the whitewashed walls further back, so little of which showed above the hillside into which the old part of the house was sunk. A long low building with double pitched roof is difficult to make really ugly, and only ingenuity in the choice of new colors or a windmill straddled above it, can make a spring-house an offense to the eye. I have, of course, come upon ugliness so attained. This is most usual on farms to which city-folk have come, ignorant of the tradition which decrees that all spring-houses shall be the color of their native stone or, if not that, the cool clear white of lime-wash.

Such a place I pass on a round I make almost weekly. The farm buildings have been left white, as they were, but the spring-house has suffered, both roof and walls, a coat of bottle-green. Its effect is aggravated by a bottle-green paling fence built beside and back of it to keep the cattle away. As the spring-house happens to be uphill from barns and farmhouse it has been deepened into a

reservoir and its water piped across the pasture to the buildings below. To such changed use are many spring-houses put, and well put. No one can quarrel with a new use, if there is no longer need of the old, but the danger of changing the style of architecture of farm buildings or their traditional colors ought to be preached far and loudly through America. Nine times out of ten usage and custom are as they are because time has proved them right.

Fortunately spring-house builders down our few generations have followed closely the simple architecture of the first spring-houses through all the changing architectural fashions. Their very simplicity has been their defense. In the experimenting Thirties of last century, however, some innovators rose to Italianate spring-houses with flat roofs, and two whose creations I know, to that hexagonal construction with pyramidal roof that was followed in summer houses and schoolhouses and other buildings of those black days of American architecture. Still another strange spring-house that I know partakes of the vagaries of that English cottage architecture that began to assert itself strongly in the two decades before the Civil War. It has steeply pitched roof with dormer windows of liberal overhang and gingerbread scrolling pendant from its gables.

There are really beautiful little buildings to be found among the many stone spring-houses of southeastern Pennsylvania. Such are beautiful not only for their situation, but in their lines, their proportions, and their olive grey of schist or red-brown of sandstone, their warm yellow of sand-coat or whitewashed roughcast. Long Island, too, has beautiful spring-houses to boast of, of old brick, long, low, willow-environed, and some of them curiously so near the salt of the tide creeks that their water will go brackish in storms.

In northern New Jersey, too, I have found quaintness, if not beauty, attained in a bandbox of a little spring-house with a flat arched copper roof. In dream I have seen one roofed with the beautiful tiles of old red of our Pennsylvania Dutch, but although on my every expedition to the German counties I think I have it

at last, the little building turns out to be corn-crib or oven or smithy.

The bank spring-houses arched over with brick or stone, and turf-covered present, many times, only a front wall of stone, with iron-barred window and heavy battened door. Many of these are so recessed into the hillside that all of their sides are banked in. Yet these, too, may have beauty of a kind, not architectural beauty, but that of the hillside into which they are built, if they have been properly subordinated to it. Most are so subordinated, by the nature of their construction perhaps, or, maybe, by happy accident. Those that are not look suspiciously like dungeons, or hermits' oratories, or saints' wells, structures all alike out of consonance with provincial America. The German wine-caves are not unlike these hillside spring-houses, which may well have been copied from them as the spring-houses proper may have been copied from English dairies. Who shall say? Suffice it they are here and interesting and of pleasant memory. They are many on our Wissahickon Hills and throughout German Pennsylvania, built to last as old country things are built. There is often no wood in them save the door, even the shelving inside being of stone.

With spring-beauties pinking their green domes in April, with witchhazel yellowing the ground about them in November, with the little path trodden through the snow to them linking their lonely situation to the home on the hill above, they partake of the beauty about them, little though they may add to it themselves. The one that I know best is no longer in use. It looks out on a little waterfall forty feet away and above it spread a walnut tree and an oak, whose joint dome of foliage rises eighty feet. The spring-house is as old as they; it was built when the pietists of the Ephrata cloister were used to stay in the "Monastery" above on their visits to Philadelphia. It is pleasant to come here on sultry days of summer and to stand a few minutes on the brick platform within looking out on the fall beyond and refreshing your ears with the noise of its waters. Earlier in the year you could not

A PIC-NIC ON THE WISSAHICKON, 1844

have lingered here, for this cell of eight by eight is so small your presence would have disturbed the pewee whose three young snuggled down in their damp nest on a jutting stone of the wall, a stone that, with the corresponding one on the opposite wall, tells you where a shelf once rested.

Further down the Wissahickon Valley, below the site of the great wooden hall of the mystics of "The Woman in the Wilderness," they point out the oratory of the order's leader. It is a chamber hollowed out of the bank and walled in, with arch above just like this bank spring-house under the "Monastery," but with no water in it. Except that you enter it on the level and not by going down steps, it is like the typical "cave" or "ground-cellar" or "arch" that so often takes the place of the spring-house where springs are not. Such, and not an oratory, I am afraid it is, but even so in it Kelpius may have prayed.

Some of these ground-cellars are built just by the well, with no wall intervening between the two from a height of about three feet above the floor of the cellar. When all the wells were bucket wells the bucket could be drawn or swung into the cellar if need be instead of being carried all the way to the surface of the ground above. But after suction pumps came into vogue direct drawing of the water into the cellar was not possible unless you would forego the water above, and this was infrequently done. In some cases a pipe was arranged so that water from the pump above could be run down into the ground-cellar. Some people leave the well open to the ground-cellar to retain its coolness but many wall it up in the belief that the meat and roots kept in the cellar taint the well's water.

The most pretentious ground-cellar that I ever knew was on the Livezey farm at Plymouth Meeting. The house and barns are of about 1790, so the original ground-cellar there was possibly constructed about the same time. There were buildings here, however, before 1790, so it may be it is older. It has been rebuilt within the memory of those still living, but it is unchanged in essentials. Originally, the well, which is just at the back of the ground-cellar

in a house of its own, was open to the ground-cellar in the manner I have described above, but it has long been walled off. As I recall it after twenty years it is a marbled chamber about twelve feet square, and surely as deep as that, with a long flight of marble steps leading down into it. That it kept its contents sweet and fresh I, who waxed fat in childhood upon produce here stored until it came to us on market days, can most stoutly attest. It was kept scrupulously clean, and, as I recall it, was always airy and of a coolness that was dry for a place so deep in earth. Its walls, whitewashed, rose fully six feet above ground, in front pillars that supported its overhanging shingle roof, and again toward its rear in eave-high solidity, but between they were cut down to three feet, the wall-top thus provided affording a convenient place for storing the great milk cans when they were empty. The part of the ground-cellar above ground thus looked very much like a spring-house.

I know others of similar appearance, but more of them I know are like a bank spring-house, or present to the passerby only an entrance like a more steeply set cellar door. The door and the stones that are its lintels are almost invariably whitewashed in the country round about Philadelphia, and this white patch standing out against the green grass of its mound in the dooryard gives an effect just the reverse of that of the green shutters against whitewashed walls of the usual farmhouse of this region.

The dip-hole, whence water for drinking was drawn, was generally, in the old spring-houses, at the place where the spring wells up from the ground or where it trickles out through the wall of the spring-house. Again the dip-hole is outside and back of the spring-house. When the dip-hole is so situated and walled around and covered, things are as they should be, for if the spring-house is still used for milk, water for drinking can be procurable before it comes about the tins.

Oftentimes a dip-hole alone really suffices for many of the uses of a spring-house. Its surrounding earth held up by evenly laid cobbles, or by a bee-gum hollowed out almost to the sapwood, or

by an old whiskey barrel maybe, you will come upon it cooling a ten-gallon milk can until the stage shall pass and bear its treasure away to the railroad.

By the Perkiomen I have found, serving as a spring-house, an old shaft through which water flows out from a long abandoned lead mine. Its owner needed only to hang doors to fit the place for all its proper functions. And by the Tuscarora, where I camped in a summer so long ago that butter sold then for twelve cents a pound and eggs for twelve cents a dozen, we used an underground stream as a spring-house. The water gushed out, cold and in good head, from under the side of the rocky gorge in which the big stream ran. In a pool just at its emergence from underground we put our meat and milk and butter, sinking them in pails partway into the water, where they kept as perfectly as though they were on ice.

Boy-like, I was greatly taken by the thought of the caverns that must be back there under the rocky hillside from which our cold stream flowed. It is partly, maybe, because caverns were man's home in the dawn of man's time that the boy finds such interest in them. And it must be partly, I think, because a spring-house was in youth to me always suggestive of a cavern that it appealed so to me. Spring-houses offered, of course, good things to eat and to drink, and a retreat from the sun and dust of much travelled roads, but this, too, explains only partly why I so liked them.

Later, I often thought, when I came on one in cool green water-meadows, itself a cool white in the shade of great white sycamores, and an inviting homey house beyond, of how good it would be to stay here a while. Imagining myself taken in for the night, and a bed spread for me with linen sheets lavendered, Cotton's lines would come to mind:

> Good God! how sweet are all things here!
> How beautiful the fields appear!
> How cleanly do we feel and lie.

But whites and greens, coolness and country contentments, the delights of the fleshpots, do not tell, as I have said, the whole story.

I think of the spring-houses I knew first and best. One I can remember almost as long as I can remember anything, that was of keen interest to me because wrens nested under its roof, and, so far as I can remember, for that reason only. Another I knew at seven I prowled about again and again because an old negro that looked to me like Uncle Remus lived over it. He was not, however, talkative or genial like Uncle Remus, and I never got a story out of him. I was half afraid of him, too, for there was something sinister about him, perhaps only extreme age and illness, conditions in themselves troubling to the healthy boy when forced upon his notice.

Better even than either of these two of childhood, I knew one I had never seen, that nearby the farmhouse in which my mother was born, and about which my aunt had so much to tell me. Here lived the Blanks, the villains of all the robber tales of the neighborhood. It was they, these spring-house dwellers, who stole hens and sucking pigs, and turkeys and corn from the crib, and, what was their undoing, guineas. One of these last, bagged with all of his clutch, had failed to succumb to the pull that broke the necks of the others. Arrived at the robbers' spring-house eyrie, the guinea began to deplore his rape in accustomed fashion, and before they could quiet him by another pull, they were proclaimed guilty to all the neighborhood. On the morrow they agreed to move. Maybe that old story, so often asked for from Aunt Rachel, and so many times faithfully recounted by her to the wondering child, made spring-houses thereafter of moment to me. But whatever the reasons are they are of moment to me, and I never pass one without wanting to linger by it and to explore its interior. Nor do I ever read the word "spring-house," or hear it, without pleasantness coming about my heart. It has a bright lyric ring to me.

1914

·A CHIMNEY SWIFT'S DAY·

IT IS more than four years now that I have lived in a little old house on the Wissahickon Hills that boasts one family of chimney birds in its main chimney each summer. Not until July 30, 1904, however, in our fifth summer in the house, did I devote a day uninterruptedly to the birds.

The swifts are tardy building in our chimney, so at this late date in the summer, the young, about six weeks old, have been flying less than a week. Their being a-wing is proclaimed by frequent misses of the chimney on the part of birds attempting to enter it and a clumsy entrance by such when at last they attain it. I am not consciously watching them all the time, but so noticeable a feature of chimney swallows' life as birds failing to make the chimney at first trial is sure to attract my attention. On days of high wind, of course, even the old birds have some trouble entering, and in great gales I have seen them miss time after time.

On July 30, I got up at four o'clock to observe the comings and goings of the swifts, but one old bird was either out before that or it escaped without my observing it in the half-dark. When it returned for the first time at 5:10, I was lying flat on the floor of our living room with my head in the open fireplace. It was light enough at this time for me to distinguish four swifts clinging to the chimney wall just below the nest, which was exactly twenty-three feet above me as I lay on the floor, and four feet and two inches below the top of the chimney. I could not see the bird's position as it entered the first time; but by practice, watching both inside and outside, I finally grew able to see just how it entered, and to distinguish between the mode of dropping in practised by it and the other old bird and that of the young birds. The old birds would sometimes

dive in head first, describing an arc of about ninety degrees, and suddenly arresting themselves and reversing by using the tail as brake, just at the mouth of the chimney. Thence they would drop to a point below the young, wings above body and body parallel to the earth, until they wished to further arrest themselves, when the wings would beat violently, producing that drumming sound so distinctive of the bird's return to the chimney.

The rapidity of the beating of the wings obscured the changing of the position of the swift's body from that of parallel to the earth to that of parallel to the chimney walls, but it seemed to me that as the birds arrested their flight they tipped down the lower parts of their bodies so that their feet could grasp the wall as they hovered close to it. They never lighted descending but always ascending, after the downward plunge had been arrested. They would continue to beat their wings after they had grasped the wall with their feet, and sometimes they would flutter up, keeping themselves off the wall by the feet, like a sailor coming up the side of a ship on a rope. At times, of course, they were assisted in mounting higher by feet as well as wings and sometimes they climbed by their feet alone. Both old and young used their tails to help support themselves, pressing the spines firmly against the chimney wall.

Other entrances to the chimney were accomplished differently. In making these the birds would come speeding home at a level, only a few feet above that of the chimney-top, suddenly stop themselves by expanding their tails, and, with wings held rigid above bodies and pointed slightly outward so as to buoy themselves in their descent, drop into the chimney mouth, to repeat the same tactics in landing on the wall of the chimney as when they dove in from a height of twenty feet or more.

The young birds had not yet learned to dive. They always came in this second manner I have described, except that they fell from a point about ten feet above the chimney-top. Often they missed entirely and often when they were directly above the chimney mouth they lost courage and circled away to try again.

Our chimney bends southwestward about four feet from the top, but within fourteen inches regains the perpendicular. This bend results in an overhang of six inches on the northeast wall and right under this the nest is placed, making it secure even in the heaviest rains. In my five summers' observation of this nest it has never come down during the summer. It remains until the heat and gas of the winter's fires below disintegrate it. This offset, while it makes the swifts' nests very safe, adds to the birds' difficulties in reaching the nest. The chimney, which is but fourteen inches by thirteen inches in the clear at its mouth, widens a little below, but the six inches' swerve from the perpendicular leaves a space of only thirteen inches by eight inches for the bird to lower itself into as it enters. As far as I could observe the old bird entered always in the very center of the open space. I think that one old bird, probably the mother, did almost all the feeding the day I watched. I could distinguish between the parents by the fact that one old bird had several feathers gone from one wing. This bird, after they were all out in the morning, I noted to re-enter only thrice before noon, and after they had hung together in the chimney for a while at noon, it left and did not re-enter until dark.

When the mother bird—for such I took to be the bird that did the feeding of the young—entered the chimney at 5:10 she dropped to a point about six inches below the four birds that hung together, and making fast to the wall there, climbed up to them. One of the four, probably the old male, dropped below the others as soon as the mother reached them. Climbing until her head was just above the head of the young one clinging at the right, the mother turned her head so that I could see the grey of her throat, and, bending slightly, disgorged. This time she succeeded in getting all the flies, small beetles and gnats safely into the squab's mouth, but on several of her trips, flies, more or less maimed, fell down. Some were so little injured they flew away.

The feeding took on this first trip, and on the average, thirty seconds. When the old bird had finished disgorging she dropped down the chimney a foot and rested a moment. Then she drummed

up and out of the chimney. As she flew out her body was at an angle of about forty-five degrees with the ground and her wings beat so rapidly that they described a dark band almost at right angles to the body. This was her usual appearance to me as I lay in the fireplace watching her lift herself out. She returned at 5:28 and fed the left-hand young one. I went out into the yard now and saw two swifts circling about, "*tsip-tsip-tsip-tsee-tseeing*" at a great rate. I saw neither enter the chimney, but when I returned to the house at 5:58 there was a great cheetering in the chimney. This racket was kept up continually while I was getting a bite to eat. The noise I made resuming my post in the fireplace at 6:13 stopped the cheetering and scared out three of the four swifts then in the chimney. My disturbance of the birds at this and other times during the day made their day not an entirely normal one, but any watching of birds that they are conscious of makes our records not entirely true to their habitual life.

At 6:20 an old bird returned and fed the one squab remaining in the chimney. After feeding its young the old bird did not immediately leave the chimney but fluttered from one wall to another, hovering often below the young one, as if trying to fan it up and out by the air from her swiftly-beating wings. Finally the old bird flew to a position just above the nest. All was to no purpose, for the young one did not follow her out when she left. The old bird then apparently tried starving the squab out, for she had not returned when the latter went out at 7:45.

No swifts returned to the chimney until 10:30, though I saw two attempt to drop in at 9:40. One was apparently an old one, to judge from its "*tsip-tsip-tsip-tsee-tseeing.*" The old bird would come in low over the chimney and spread out its tail feathers in the manner referred to above, but the young one could not drop from so low a height above the chimney and when it did finally manage it at 10:30 after two more unsuccessful attempts at 10:05 and 10:20 it slowed down about ten feet above the chimney mouth and dropped in from there. Another young one entered at 10:40 under circumstances similar to the first's except that the mother

went in with it. She went out again almost immediately and was in again in a minute by a dive (10:41). Out she came again at 10:43 and picked up the young bird that had accompanied her when she dived in at 10:41. It again attempted to drop in with her and again failed, she going off with it when she knew it had missed.

The two squabs already in came out now. I saw the four circling together at 10:45. A young one attempted to enter alone at 10:51, but its courage failed when it was just over the chimney mouth. Its mother picked it up again and the two entered at 10:56. Another entered at 10:58 and two more, one of these the bird with the thinly-feathered wing, at 11. The latter came out at 11:01 but returned again at 11:22. I ceased watching now for ten minutes. A swift was entering the chimney when I came back to my post. This was a seat in the back yard that commanded a view of the chimney from a distance of fifty feet. Another came out almost immediately. At 11:42 the two old birds entered, sweeping along until they were right over the chimney mouth at a height of but a few feet, when they spread their tails wide, the unfolded feathers showing brown against the sunlight, and thus staying their flight, dropped straight as leads into the chimney. The two remained inside. Another, evidently a young one, attempted to enter at 11:46 but failed, as it did twice more between 11:51 and 11:52.

A young one was still circling about as I climbed up the roof at twelve o'clock sharp to look down the chimney at the birds. I could observe them easily, as the chimney extends but twenty inches above the crest of the roof. Four swifts were hanging below the nest in a bunch, like bees on a comb. They remained quiet as I, scarcely six feet above them, looked down at them. They turned their heads to look up at me. Then I could see how round were their bright eyes and how soft the grey of their throats. This grey, in the gloom of the chimney, contrasted very distinctly with the black-brown of their wings and the sooty brown of the crowns of their heads. As I stooped lower to look at them more closely they began to complain in a voice I had never heard a swift use before, a voice something like that of the catbird's when it mews and

something like that of the nighthawk's when it twangs nasally, but a voice more subdued than that of either bird. Three of the swifts fluttered away from their favorite hanging-place under the nest, but none flew out of the chimney, and the one that had been circling around when I was on the roof dropped in a few minutes after I had slid down.

I went immediately to look at them from below, but there were but four in the chimney then. Another entered at 12:15, but, possibly disturbed by me as I changed position in the fireplace, two lifted themselves out at 12:27. One returned almost immediately and one went out at 12:28. There was no feeding on either of these last entries. An old bird returned and fed the right-hand young one at 12:38. It went out after the usual half-minute's stay and returned at 12:52, to leave again after feeding the left-hand young one. There was a great deal of cheetering every time a bird entered the chimney, but none when a bird left, unless it disturbed another on its way out. The young birds were constantly shifting their positions. Sometimes they fluttered a good deal and moved down or up the chimney; they did not shift right or left more than a half inch unless they changed the wall on which to hang, which was very seldom. The young birds generally hung two just below the nest, and one below these two, but sometimes all three hung close together, and sometimes the parent would remain for two minutes beside the young she had fed, but she very infrequently did this. I was summoned to lunch as I saw the old bird enter again at 1:12. I heard a great cheetering at 1:30, and left the table to look up the chimney. There were but two young hanging there, one below the other, and the mother was feeding the lower one.

In a few minutes after I resumed my observations, at 2 o'clock, I saw an old bird enter, and she returned again at 2:20. Late in the afternoon there were but two birds in the chimney, but from 2 until 3:40 there were three. Two hung side by side, the mother feeding these oftener than the bird which usually hung just below. On one trip she visited all three, but whether she fed all three I could not tell. The lower bird seemed stronger than the other two,

fluttering at times to other positions, and it may be that the mother failed to visit it every third time she came back from her sky-harvesting because she thought it able to shift for itself, or it may be that it was not fed because it was not in what she considered its proper place on the northeast wall. I never saw her feed it unless it was on that wall below the other two. It was not in place on the mother's 2:31 trip, nor on her 2:55 trip. It was in place at 3:15 and was fed. It followed the mother out after her visit at 3:40. She returned at 3:54, then at 4:31, and then at 4:50. On this last visit she stayed in for two minutes instead of for the usual thirty seconds. Her remaining visits before all were in for the night were at 5:18, 5:32, 5:43, 6:05, 6:40, 6:54 and 7:10.

Just after seeing the mother enter this last time I went up to the roof and saw four swifts hanging in such a bunch as I have described before; the old bird flew out as soon as I drew back from the chimney-top. At 7:29 I saw a bird return, but whether the mother or the father (the one with the thinly-feathered wing) it was too dark to make out. Another went in before 7:30. I again climbed up to look down the chimney, but it was now too dark for me to see the birds. Even a light held at the bottom of the chimney did not illuminate it enough for me to make out their number. I let a lantern down from the top but it so distressed them, driving them, as I gradually lowered it, further and further down the chimney, with great drumming and mewing, that I desisted.

Except on the rarest occasions the swifts entered the chimney from one direction and left in another. They almost invariably tossed themselves out to the northwest, for in that direction were fewest trees. They did not habitually come in from this direction, for the reason, I suppose, that they would have to face about in dropping, so as to land on the northeast wall below the nest. If they came in from any other direction than from the southwest, though, it was from the northwest. About two hundred feet to the southwest of the chimney are trees very much higher than the chimney, very tall trees indeed, and in order to enter so they might face the northeast wall on which they customarily hung,

they had to come through an opening in the trees dead south of the chimney and then turn sharply northeast within a hundred feet of the chimney. I never saw them dive down from over the great trees to the southwest. At times I have seen the old birds dive in from the northwest, where is a field with only a few trees in it. The young birds could not come in, until two weeks later, from any direction but the southwest. To land in their favorite place from this dive from the northwest the swifts must not only reverse themselves as they always must do after diving, but must turn when in the chimney from facing southeast to facing northeast—quite a feat. To go out the northwest way they always began to turn from northeast—as they were facing in their starting place—to northwest, while beating up the chimney. By the time they reached the top they would face northwest and would have simply to toss themselves out, which they would do in a great swoop that would carry them to within ten feet of the ground before they began to mount upwards.

On July 31, the morning after my day of close observation of the Swifts, I observed them pretty carefully. The chimney was empty from 8:30 to 12. A bunch hung together for a while at noon. Two young birds spent most of the afternoon in the chimney. They preened themselves even more diligently than they did the previous day, and loose feathers were dropping every time I looked up the chimney. Those feathers, lodged in crannies of the brick and stone and plaster of the walls, caught the light like spiders' webs on dewy grass, and glinted silver among the shadows in the chimney. The old birds, too, lost some of their long wing feathers, and by August 7 there was quite a collection of small feathers and half a dozen long feathers in the fireplace. By August 14, the young birds could enter the chimney as well as their parents, diving fearlessly. After August 17 I never saw them enter the chimney by day or heard them drumming there, day or night, for our chimney never had been a "swallow roost."

I still see (September 20) and I shall see yet for three weeks, if this season is like previous ones, swifts sporting in the great trough

of air between the long line of woods a hundred yards to the southeast of our house and the lines of tall trees along the lanes to our southwest and northwest. But in the chimney of our little house, that stands opposite a break in this northwest line, it will be next year's May before we have the chimney birds again.

1904

·JINGLE BELLS·

THERE was nothing more deplorable to me in childhood than that we had no sleigh. There were not many weeks in most winters when we could have used one had we had it, but there was scarcely a winter without at least one week's sleighing. Winters then were no colder or snowier than winters now; nor were winters a hundred and fifty years ago colder or snowier, despite the prevalent belief that our climate is growing warmer. I once spent all my spare time for three months trying to find out what was the weather on December 6, 1759. I did not succeed in finding a record of what it was that day, though I did find, through the clearances of ships from Philadelphia, what the weather was a few days before and after that date. What I did discover was that the weather in that pre-Revolutionary day was very like the weather in the year I was looking up that old time, the year nineteen-nine. Three days of freezing and three days of thawing were as usual to winter then as to winter now. The Delaware froze over then as rarely as it freezes over now. An ox-roast on the ice was an occurrence possible only once a generation.

One winter I recall, I think it was the winter of 1903–04, there was sleighing for six weeks, a most unusual cold spell for our Wissahickon Hills. Sleighing, indeed, is rare any year nowadays, for next to nobody has horses, and only an odd horseman a sleigh. Most of such horsemen as use the bridle paths or the Wissahickon Drive itself are riders only. Yet in that yesterday when was my youth there were sleighs quite a few. Our next-door neighbor on Tulpehocken Street had two sleighs, and the neighbor next to him two sleighs also. They sometimes let me ride to school on the runner, but more often they insisted that I get in and ride on the

seat, which I did not like so well. Now and then I was taken for a sleigh-ride out into the country, but such, all told, were not many. Hitching with coasting sleds drawn by horses I experienced more often. I went sleighing in state, though, not more, I think, than a score of times altogether.

Well I remember the last time I so sleighed. I was at work then, a newspaper reporter. I had pleased a prodigal son who had endowed a church, and enlarged it, in honor of his mother, in the country town he had scandalized in his youth. He was pleased with my "write-up" of the church's re-dedication. He invited me to a sleigh-ride, which included a little feast at a tavern on the way back to town. The whole affair was too modest to amount to a "party" but the pace of it all and the vividness of the progidal's dress made it almost a sporting occasion. When I arrived at the stable from which we were to set out I found him arrayed in purple and fine linen. What was purple on him was his tie, conspicuous against the white of his fine linen, but what was purple on his sleigh was all its body color. His overcoat was only a little on the fawn side of yellow, about the color of the cow we called Alderney in that day. There were purple rosettes on the horse's head, and the horse blanket under the sleigh seat bore broad lines of purple about its margins.

I was rather disappointed it was not a two-horse sleigh I was to be charioted in, but I soon realized that it would have been difficult to have found another horse gaited as this one and of his color. He was fawn-colored like a circus horse, and a pacer, a beautiful beast that took us along at a round pace even through the city streets. When my charioteer let him out on the Wissahickon Drive I enjoyed the fastest locomotion I had ever known in Fairmount Park.

Fast horses I had known, for a friendly neighbor who thought that I was being brought up too puritanically had made a point of taking me to the Gentlemen's Driving Park over Schuylkill, as he had of taking me to Carncross's Minstrels. This sleigh-ride, however, made one for the first time aware of what it was to be whisked

along at a few-minutes-a-mile gait. "Seven miles an hour" all the signs read, but we went at a gait double that at times, and the whole trip up to Valley Green and back to Ridge Avenue seemed over in a trice.

I was not sorry when it was over, for my host was ill at ease until he got back to the tavern, where liquor made him his genial self once more. There had been plenty of robes in the sleigh, a buffalo robe topping them, but it was a perishingly cold day and we had no foot-warmers. I wished many times in that brief hour or less that I had had a well-baked piece of soapstone under my feet.

I record this incident, out of consonance as it may seem with most I have recorded about the Wissahickon, because if you are to have the valley as it was in old time, you must touch on the sporting groups that used it as a place of resort. Fast folks found it good, as did the Sunday school classes that held their picnics here. Liquor, of course, was not supposed to be sold in the park, but it was as easy to bring it there in old times as it is now. Sometimes, too, the German family groups brought their beer with them, but from such people there was never any disturbance. Nor was there on the Wissahickon any such music as attracted them to Schützen Park, the music from which, on summer nights when the wind was south, carried all the way up the valley and to our house well back on its hills.

It was Saturday afternoon and Sunday that were the valley's dubious times. We were rather a puritan people, most of us who lived round about the Wissahickon, and we looked a little askance at the week-end doings in the valley. Among the boaters in summer and among the skaters in winter there were rowdy elements, as there were among the men and women who drove horses fast or slow to buggies or to sleighs.

All these memories of the valley came back to me this February 16th as I tramped up from the Monastery to Indian Rock. There was about three inches of snow, but it was light snow, and the ground had hardly a half inch of frost in it when the snow fell. The

conditions did not make for good sleighing. On the Drive itself I saw only one sleigh, a staid family affair of two seats, and drawn by two horses. The two had all they could do to draw it at a crawl, so deeply did the runners cut through in most places. Father was driving with one little child, and one little white woolly dog, on the front seat, and mother and another small child were on the back seat. On my way home I saw another two-seated sleigh, apparently on its way to the Drive. The unfavorable conditions were responsible, perhaps, for so few sleighs being out, but I have never of recent years passed more than a baker's dozen of sleighs in any three miles of the Drive. Fifty years ago a full thirteen score would have passed in a like distance.

1930

IX

For JOSEPH HEAD

in memory of nineteenth-century days . . .

Of PLUMS, PLUM-BLOW *and* THINGS IN KIND

THERE were no plum trees about the house in which I was born. There were no plum trees on the place of which I have my first memories. There were no plum trees on the place in which I lived from seven to seventeen. There may have been once plum trees set out on all these places. They were suburban places of southeastern Pennsylvania, in the environs of Philadelphia, where it was the tradition to plant on such places what fruit would do well. Pears were the surest crop, and then cherries. There had been a time when peaches had done well, as they were again to do in later years, but now "the yellows" got them all. Apples were an off-and-on crop hereabouts. Certain varieties of dessert fruit did well certain years, and crab apples always, but no one relied on apples in the back yard for winter fruit. Apples came from up-country, and were bought in the fall by the barrel and stored in the coolest part of the cellar.

Plums, too, came from up-country, most of them, for those were the days before the fruit trains from the Pacific coast. So it was when I saw plums on trips to Mauch Chunk or the Water Gap, or to other places about the Blue Mountains, they always seemed more desirable than the more familiar fruits. Nursery rhymes originating in England, in whose cooler climate plums do well, had treated plums as everyday sort of things, but they never seemed such to me. So it was, perhaps, with others before me. My

mother, and her sister, made the preserving of Green Gages one of the great occasions in the ritual of kitchen and pantry. My mother thought them the choicest of all preserves, and we children recognized it as a gala night when they made their appearance on the table. There is a richness in preserved plums of this variety that is unlike any richness of peach or cherry or apricot. It always seemed to me as if there was a greater concentration of sunlight in the yellow of Green Gages than in any other fruit. The cherry was too small and the peach too large to catch and hoard the sun as did the Green Gage. Then, too, the Green Gages had not been made plebeian by canning as were peaches and cherries. Green Gages were rarer, choicer, tastier, more aristocratic than the apples and the pears, the cherries and the peaches.

There is, I think, or there at least was, an eighteenth-century air about the plum. It was a choice dessert fruit in that old time; it made a cordial that was cherished by epicures; it lent its color to the most resplendent full dress of the period. It was not only Dr. Oliver Goldsmith who rejoiced in his plum-colored coat. We have to confess, though, that the plum has come down in the world. That which once followed peacock on the tables of the great is now only henyard fruit. You find plum trees everywhere now making the shade in runs that restrain that most utilitarian of fowls, the White Leghorn, from Portland to Petaluma, from Canada to Florida. Now we all but shovel Oregon prunes from tree to drying oven. In old times, in Provence, they picked each *Perdrigon blanc* separately by its stem before sunrise and deposited it gently in vine-leaves. It was unprofaned by human touch when it went into the drying oven. What names, too, the plum had yesteryear, *Reine Claude du Bavoy*, *Royale de Tours*, *Jaune Hative*, *Imperatrice Violette*, *Dame Aubert*, *Mirabelle d'Octobre*, and *Musque de Malte*. And even until today it has been cherished as something rare and strange by certain of the elect. "I allays held the plum the first of fruits," said a follower of the track to me. "Its skin has a bloom like that of a race-horse." Plum-pudding, that so often knows no plums; sugarplums that are plums only in name; and Simple Simon

rhymes and their like have made the word and the fruit too familiar. The currency which the Hon. M. S. Quay gave to the old saw about "shaking the plum tree" marked another stage in its vulgarization. The Senator from Pennsylvania was alluding to the offices which would be available for disposal when his party won at the polls. He would then "shake the plum tree." All America understood the figure, that part which is symbolized by Uncle Sam and that part which is symbolized by Uncle Remus. The universal association of the plum with richness and plenty and a spoil beyond desert was proven by the way the whole country took the phrase to heart.

That it is a perfect rhyme for rum has still further democratized the plum, I fear.

> Poun' er sugar, en a pint er rum
> Ain't nigh so sweet ez de Pummerly Plum,

sings Uncle Remus, proving that the plum is a southern fruit as well as a northern. It is sung, too, by W. H. Davies, the Welsh poet, who knows how to smack his lips over the sweets of life as loudly as Uncle Remus. He knows both "blue-black Damsons" and "yellow plums" when they are "sweet and soft from stone to skin." The *Domesticas*, or European plums, were tall trees that held their fruit well above the passerby and could be harvested properly only by long ladders, but the Japanese and American varieties most universally cultivated today are low-growing friendly trees that very often yield their fruit without ladders. Some, indeed, are so low you can strip the tree standing on the ground.

The hub-brakes had bothered us all three miles from home. They were new, raybestos lined, too big for the drums that revolved around them. We felt the drums a half mile out and found them hot, but we let them go as they were, thinking that the bands would wear down quickly. Now, on Brown Hill, the Ford began to drag. Arrived at a shelf on the hill, we pulled to the roadside by a deserted house, jacked the car up, and set to work to

file down the brake-covering. It was father and son who were busy so. Daughter led mother prospecting. Before we had one brake properly adjusted we heard shouts from the leading prospector. She had found red apples fully ripe now, though August was little more than half gone. The apples were so beautiful to look at it did not much matter that her teeth found them mealy and her tongue found them flat. We came and tasted and returned to our work. The small girl filled her "pinny" full of them, poured them in a bright pile in the lush grass, played with them, was content with them until our job was done. Then she led us in back of the empty house. She had had her eye on low trees in a wired-in poultry yard there. As we worked round it, hunting for an opening, our eyes suddenly bulged. We had seen a few plums on the trees, red fellows little and round, on our first approach. Now we came on other trees laden almost to the breaking point, some of them, with their weight of dark red fruit. Once in the yard, we found more plums on the ground, even, than on the trees. I had something, again, of the boy's fun in forbidden fruits, gathering the plums up out of the grass that now matted thickly the chicken-runs.

All the family fell to the gathering, and we were soon back at the Ford unloading ourselves of hats full and pockets full and skirts full. Then back to the trees we went. We had no compunctions now about taking the plums. Evidently nobody wanted them. Half, indeed, of those on the ground were already too soft for use. We all ate of the plums as we gathered them. They were dead ripe, and melted in the mouth. So mellow was their juicy, honey-colored flesh, that you had scarcely to do more than press them with your tongue. Its whole energy, practically, could be given to absorption of their taste. There was just a slight tartness about the stone to offset what had been else an after-taste of over-sweet.

Did we worry as to what varieties of plums they were? Not then. Then we ate, ate all we wanted, and harvested, harvested all we wanted, a half bushel maybe. By night the half bushel was jam, a jam of bright plum red, that delighted me by its color as it

cooled away to a luscious paste in all sorts of receptacles, narrow pickle bottles, bacon jars of glass, cheese jars of white ware, and handleless white cups gold-banded.

At many meals thereafter, from that August night until this night of the March succeeding on which I write, have I blessed those brakes too snug for the drums, without whose failings we had not had this jam. Others, we heard later, had followed us in pilfering, and the owner of the place had grumbled a bit at his home up the road. Neighborhood gossip dismissed this grumbling as constitutional, however, adding that it was the high price of sugar that had kept him from preserving them himself. Some neighbors added that he had said that a half mile uphill was too far to go for plums.

Every time I have spread the jam on bread, as I spread it to-night, I have thought of that hen-yard orchard, with its trees of so low and open and spreading a growth, and of the thousands of dark-red plums. What variety most of them were I am not sure, but Burbank and Abundance, as well as I can recall them. There were some American plums among them, in taste very like Wolf, and others that might have been Wildgoose. It is likely there were trees of both varieties, planted for cross-pollenization. There were a tree or two of a European variety, with a few purple plums hanging on them, but they were devitalized by black-knot. There must have been forty or fifty trees in all in the yards, a few of which were cherry and peach. The look of the little orchard of plums remains with me, too, and it will last longer in memory, I suspect, than the taste of the jam. The harvest of the eyes is more durable than that of the tongue. Never before had any fruit seemed so tempting and so beautiful to me. There was a preciousness as of rubies in the glint of the plums among their foliage. The wind stirred the leaves, letting the sun through now on this branch of red rounds, and now on that. The light illumined now a single plum until it glowed as if with a fire within. Then a row of red plums kindled. Then as the wind fell, or shifted, all were hidden. This from a distance. From under the trees the plums were just plump lusciousness that

tempted the lips and tongue. No apples had ever comforted me as did these plums. No apples could, unless by a miracle they were apples out of Eden or from the Garden of the Hesperides. And these apples, I am sure, since this experience which I chronicle, were really plums. No other fruit could have so tempted Eve or lured Hercules so far from home.

Fond of the fleshpots as I am, I have had as much joy out of looking at plums as in eating them, or any of the many preserves made out of them. Burbank or Abundance or Wolf heaped, in their differing shades of red, on a compote of blue Canton or in a great bowl of blue willow ware, delight me every summer's end. They have delighted me, too, on the trees in my hen-yards, where I often catch their little red globes against the misty blue of the mountains. Plum-blossom has given me still more joy, I think, than any I have ever had from the fruit, whether through eyes or lips. It is one of the things I begin to long for before it comes, the blow of plums, like the song of the wood thrush and the scent of wild grape. It used to be there was enough of the bloom close by home for me to enjoy it by just walking to my neighbor's orchard, but now it is one of the things I must make an expedition to find.

In its white, in its cold and inviolate white, plum-blossom can never be to us what apple-blossom is. There are plums with creamy blossoms, but they are not the plums that most of us set out. There are plums with the faintest tinge of green in their blossoms, the first of the whole family to blow. And there are plums the petals of whose blossoms turn pinky at full blow, but their pink is a faded and not a fresh tint. There is a thrill in pink and white, such as the pink and white of apples, that white alone cannot give, a thrill that warms and lightens the heart.

There is a thrill in white, too, and when the white of plum-blossom breaks from black wood it searches me through and through with little stabs of sweetness. There is a wildness in all white that breaks from blackness. White blossoms hiding their supporting twigs and branches have the peace of virgin things. It is when you can see the blow against the black wood from which

it has broken that swift arrows of ecstasy are unloosed in you. Then you know poignancy, a poignancy you cannot translate into words. All you can say is that you are left with a sense of keen sweetness. The sweetness of apple-blossom is not keen; it is kind.

Those days I remember as days of plums in bloom are days of April that echo with March. The wind about the house has still the austerity of winter in its voice. No leaves are unfolded yet to soften its tones. The bird notes about are all those of earliest spring, those of song-sparrow and bluebird, grackle and robin, flicker and dove. The thrasher waits for cherry-blow. With apple-bloom will come the wood thrush, with the fall of apple-blow the wren. The grass in the dooryard is at its greenest, the sky its intensest blue.

In our countryside of southeastern Pennsylvania you can see far over the fields and meadows on days of plum-blow. The only green above the grass is the green of the willows, and their leafing is still so sparse it is never more than a veil. You pick out a plum tree here, and a plum tree there, as you follow the white pikes, seldom a row of plum trees, and almost never an orchard.

This is not plum country, at least in popular belief, and many homes are content with one tree in the homeyard, or with the trio of "blue and red and yellow,"—Lombard and Pond and Green Gage as often as not, if it is an old planting. You are never out of sight of plum-bloom as you follow any of the pikes out of Philadelphia, Old York Road or Bethlehem Pike, Reading Pike or Lancaster Pike, West Chester Pike or Baltimore Pike, but you never tire of plum-bloom on any of the old roads because of an overplus. Each tree is a thing to enjoy of itself, against the dooryard's green nine times out of ten, and the tenth time against the blue of the sky. You are aware of bees about the plum trees, although there is too much wind as a rule on such April days for the humming to come to you, unless the flow of air is your way. That flow of air brings, too, the scent of the blossoms, now and then. In the bright sunlight every tree stands out as a prim nosegay among the greater primness of whitewashed buildings.

Larks call from far and near. Purple finches warble gently as

they bud the cherries yet to blow. Turkey buzzards sail high in the great brightness that overspreads the world. Hens are noisy everywhere. They cackle over eggs new laid, they cluck to chicks white and yellow that race hither and thither about whitewashed coops set out in the orchards. The white fences, the white houses, the white barns flash in the sunlight by the white pike. All is in perfect upkeep, all is in apple-pie order, all is eloquent of skill and hard work and profit, for this is Lancaster County, famous for tobacco, famous for alfalfa, famous for corn, famous for cattle, famous for most crops, vegetable and animal, that may be grown.

Of all this snugness and prosperity whitewash is the symbol. So universal, indeed, is whitewash, that every other plum tree is whitewashed man high. The few peach trees, light pink and large of blossom, that are coming into bloom, seem almost a violation of the law of white that orders this countryside. Even the hens are white, nine flocks out of ten, Leghorns or Rocks or Wyandottes. "Plums and Poultry!" I think of the slogan, as I come on a long laying-house with double yards, yards front and yards back, all planted with plum trees. Burbank and Abundance it is a safe guess to say they are by color and close clustering of blow and contour of tree. We who are Pennsylvania Dutch like heavy yields, of hens or plums, and put up with no variety of either that will not fill the baskets at the right times of the year.

Dooryard fruit though it is, in so many of its varieties, the plum flourishes far from the dooryard in others. Go to lonely stretches of waste land along the Atlantic, and you will find one of these latter varieties. It is an humble brother of the stock, but as beautiful as any in blossom and as heavy laden as any in harvest. The beach plum is so slow of growth and so impatient of crowding, it can develop only where little else will grow. It may establish itself in abandoned clearings in the barrens, but its chosen home is upon the hummocks that roll back from the dunes along the sea. It was once to be found in its myriads on the narrow islands off the Jersey shore, but their dunes are now so generally levelled to make sites and concrete blocks for the houses of summerers

that the beach plum is no longer a feature of any chance trip to the shore.

You must make a special pilgrimage to the Jersey coast now if you are to find it in bloom or fruitage. You must know where to go, and when to go. Good plunder of it may still be had in places if you have lust of its blow or fruit in your heart. There was never a heavier crop of beach plums than at Cape May in the fall of 1920, never more plums picked from small areas and never plums of finer flavor. Further north there was never a heavier blossoming of beach plums than in the April of that early spring that followed, the spring of 1921.

There is still an island that I know which is pretty much as it has been since the country was settled. I made my way there toward April's end, on a day of wind offshore and of prodigal sun. It was a day after a day of rain, and the beach was firm, and dazzling white under the sun of noon. There was a volleying wind. The land shelved steeply into the sea, so that the waves, white capped and with spume flying, rolled in close before they broke and came suddenly to a mere ripple at my feet. Schooners stood in close, some of them even between the fish-pounds and the shore. Gulls in dispersed groups were northing, dull colored as they sheared the grey water, snow white, most of them, when they buoyed up, and their feathers caught the sun. It was all good, all this great out-of-doors, the curve of the shore, the sea grown friendly, the limitless sweep eastward, but too large for your heart to take in. I turned inland; and climbed a steep dune; and knew content in the first glimpse of what was westward. Before me grass grew sparsely in the sand, scarcely dimming its whiteness. Beyond, a broad ribbon of sage-grey heath rolled obliquely off, soft to the eye, thick carpeting the slow-rising contours of the next line of dunes.

As my glance followed the grey ribbon to where it crossed the dunes at their lowest, my eyes fell on a mass of white bloom, intensely white bloom, domed up against a background of bronze-green cedars. My eyes shifted right, shifted left, dwelling on other

masses of plum-blow against dark cedars, and, here and there, in the lowest places, against andromeda flushed a purer pink than I had seen in andromeda before. Now and then it was the grey drifts of bare bayberry thicket that made a background for the plums, now a shoulder of a dune sage-grey with hudsonia. In certain hollows of low growth, cranberry perhaps, were jagged patches of purple, looking as if they had been laid on irregularly with a palette knife. Whites, old greys, low greens, touches of pink, touches of purple, and everywhere the soft white of plum blossoms, all in sure harmony, composed themselves into a picture fresh and lyric as the day.

My eyes lifted again, and, beyond the hummocks and lower tufted places, I saw the leaden waters of the thoroughfare, broken as freely with whitecaps as the heath with plum-bloom. And beyond, and above, lifted the dim purple line of the treed mainland, and beyond and above the wood's line a sky that deepened from thin grey to utter blue, high piled with soft masses of white clouds.

It is something to treasure down the years, all this. And the kindling breeze, with its scent of salt marsh, and with the tarry smell I know from of old to be that of fish nets drying in the sun. It brings, too, that breeze, bird voices, thinned by the distance and by the muffled voice of the sea. I identify the notes of redwing and brown thrasher, of yellowthroat and chewink, of song-sparrow and seaside finch, a little incongruous all but the shivering last, because so well remembered in so different places. In the finch song is something of the genius of the place, a place that would be lonely, as it is aloof, were it not for the plum-blow. That blow, despite its so heathy background, suggests inevitably the orchard and the fostering care of man. Without that suggestion all would be a beauty too outland and wild for your heart to hold. As the heath is, with its domed mounds of plum-blow dotting it here, and massed there, if you can take it in, you can love it, and in it know content.

Inland, too, in places where poor soil or swampiness has kept

out axe and plough, you will find wild plum, not the beach plum, but a form of that *Prunus Americana* which is so widespread. It is easy to miss, so remote are most of the places where it grows.

The narrow road elbows around a clump of cedars and dips sharply toward the Delaware. Just in time the brakes go on and we slide slowly over a sudden thank-you-ma'am. A glance ahead and down shows a straight way of a hundred yards, red and high crowned, an open roadside to the left, low banked and thinly green, and below, filling all the little bottom, mists of greeny-white bloom mantling a high thicket along a little creek. The brakes go on again. Stock-still, our eyes drink their fill of an unaccustomed beauty.

There are stretches of country in which wild plums are common enough by the roadside, or harbored in the dooryard, but not here in the hills above the Delaware, or in any section of southeastern Pennsylvania that I know well. In districts of New Hampshire every other homestead has its thicket of Canada plums, (*Prunus Nigra*), but the more southern form is almost unknown about our Pennsylvania farmhouses, and not common even in the unused swampy places in which it so thrives. Twenty miles to the westward of the thicket under Jericho Mountain, I know of another, lower and in even greater lustihead, and sixty miles west and north of the Montgomery County thicket, a half-dozen others by Plum Creek in Berks.

There has been ice for two nights now, and our Berks County thicket is in a frosty spot. The hardy blossoms, just breaking out of their spiny spurs, are, however, untouched by the cold. They will make an even braver show than that of today when the weather turns kindly again. Then the black twigs will hang heavier with an even whiter blow, and an even headier scent will fill the hollow. As it is, however, the thicket is of the very essence of April, a virginal and not a bridal white, faintly sweet and not burdening all the air about.

When we think how much of the beauty of out-of-doors passes with none to heed it we have a double joy in a memory of things of

beauty such as these thickets. One year, at any rate, we did not miss the blow of the wild plums under Jericho Mountain. And yet, so are beauty and the grotesque allied by accident, that we speak of the day of our discovery as the day we saw wild plum and the barn owl nailed to the fence. Not a mile away from the swale of the plum thicket, just as we turned out on the pike, poor *Aluco Pratincola*, weathered a more than his natural white, adorned the top slab of a three-barred gate.

The more northern wild plum, the Canada plum, grows in similar places about my summer home in New Hampshire, but it is now much rarer there than in the dooryards. The early settlers dug the wild trees up and planted them close by their houses. The man who cleared our place in 1805–06 planted them by the log house that was his first home, and there they are still, the worse for the years, but of better fruit than the thriving clump he planted by the clapboard house he started just across the road within a few years of his settlement. The plums by the site of the log house ripen earlier, and are larger and juicier and better tasted than their fellows four rods away. In spring all are beautiful with their white blow clustering so thickly on their black twigs. In summer their thin foliage allows the ripening fruit to show the red and yellow drupes. In fall their leaves redden early. One does not wonder the "plumgranate" was a favorite in those old times when lilacs were almost the only dooryard shrub and apples were still for the most part ungrafted.

There were very old Shropshire Damsons at the back of the house when we bought the place, a veritable thicket of them, but badly infested with black-knot. Still we had for several years good sauce of them, as we still have of the Canada plums. Now we have a hard time keeping even the smallest Damsons free of the black-knot. The Burbank and Abundance and Wolf plums do well in the henyards. This is, indeed, good plum country.

As surely a part of our lives as any of the plum-blow about the house, or the fruit that follows it, is the wonderful plum-bloom that comes over the mountains all about us of summer evenings.

It has a way of being at its best just as the supper-bell rings, but every once in a while, when we have been out in the car, we see it in its coming, its full bloom, and its going. Like most things of beauty it lasts only a little while.

Night had been an hour away a mile back and the mountains a glowing plum-color. There you had felt them a rich claret red behind the bloom, but a frost of blue made them plum, plum of a texture as soft and virgin as that of the German prune's full cheek. As we drive on now in the very shadow, the mountains darken to the grey of mole-skin, Black and Whiteface both. Mole-grey, too, are what you can see through the trees of their fellows, Passaconaway and Toadback, Old Shag and Chocorua. It is twilight here on the under-mountain road, twilight that threatens quick nightfall. Whiteface alone is before us as we move northward, looming up sheer, with gloom between its two great buttresses of granite. As the road lifts under us, an aureole of afterglow spreads over Flat Mountain and a shoulder of Whiteface turns plum-blue in its light. Then our car runs again into shadow, and night is very near.

Night, August night, and a burden of old sorrow! The words sound in my ears as if evoked by a horn's echoes over these high pastures. There is romance in the hour, in the place, in the gloom that is engulfing the mountains. That romance speaks no less distinctly, though, through the bloom of plum that spreads again along their slopes as our road lifts, and shifts its angle toward the west. Night is gone for the moment, but you know the afterglow its close forerunner. And through the afterglow, too, you hear again the words, spoken in tones like those that are a French horn's—"Night, August night!" A burden of old sorrow falls, your heart labors, and is stilled. It eases itself now, as thoughts gather of old happiness. That happiness is only for a moment, though, and then is gone. A sense that yesterday on Mill Road was braver than is today prevails and will not down. That is the tragedy of it all. What of the life of this road that is not gone is going. And now the wind breathes abroad its faint lament, and

night falls—night, August night, with its burden of old sorrow, its heartsease of old happiness.

Again the road shifts, and again we see the mountain slopes frosted with plum-bloom. What is it is abroad in the strange light? Common things are insistent near us. The rattle of the car, the chug of its engine, the crish of its wheel-shoes on the wet road. The little car pulls on with all the full strength of its twenty horses, uphill and through slippery mud. What makes it almost a live thing? What makes its engine seem to whinny contentment under its breath? The air rushes by with the promise of frost in it, with something of foreboding, of the menace of the winter to be. Somehow, however, the hour, for all the loneliness of our road, is humanized, made sweet and homely and beneficent.

There are more cellar holes than houses by the road, and of these few houses not all show lights in the windows. It is a half-deserted countryside. And yet there is a sense of companionship abroad tonight. Is it only that we are going home? Is it that what lights there are in the few houses, houses long and low and earth-clinging, are beacons to some hidden sense in us? Is it that our hearts are touched at this hour of home-seeking by emotions of all the many men and women who in days past have come this way home? Do these folk somehow, obscurely and unconsciously, make their long-dead selves an influence on us by these many road-side signs of their labor? This road we follow they made. These fields growing up to birch they cleared. This interval they ditched. These mountains they looked out on and were glad of. What of joy and sorrow our kind may know these ways have known. All that matters has happened here, youth and mating, fellowship and wonder, work and dream, birth and death. In old time men have kindled here to beauty, in such hours as this of evening light. Is it that I am living over again, in this bloom that infuses the very air with strange plum glow, some moments of those to whom this under-mountain town was all in all? I do not know.

But this I saw. Suddenly as the car drove again into shadow, a rift in the black. Out of the night falling breaks a moment of some

old May morning. I see white blossoms under the sun. I hear white-throats calling, calling, calling, their intervals of delayed notes filled in with the hum of bees in their hundreds. "Buckwheat! Buckwheat!" The guinea's homely call shrills across the quieter music of birds and bees. As I hear it again: "Buckwheat! Buckwheat!" it seems not quite authentic. Then the sound of feet running! All the chords of spring crash major as youth and girl meet by the grey wall, under the white blossoms.

Plum-bloom on the mountains, bloom of the color of ripe plums made sweet by early frost, has brought back somehow from old years this moment of plum trees in full blow.

As suddenly as it came the whiteness goes. Twilight flows in about us. Near to us, high above us, the mountains darken from the cool ripeness of plum-bloom of red to the cold ripeness of plum-bloom of blue.

1919

·THE RAIN-CROW·

THE cuckoos, yellow-billed and black-billed, have been known birds from the coming of the English stock to America. They were early called rain-crows because of their habit of calling more profusely than usual before rain. It may be, too, that they were from these earliest days recognized as cuckoos from their resemblance to the English bird and from the remote likeness of their calls to its calls. In New England I have heard the bird called both cuckoo and rain-crow by men who had no knowledge of birds from books.

The older brothers and sisters of my mother, who were country bred, distinguished the cuckoos' notes for me from those of the dove, with which I had confused them. In my childhood in Germantown the yellow-billed cuckoo was, indeed, a commoner bird than the mourning dove, and I had thought the cuckoo's stuttering and clucking and cooing were made by the dove until Aunt Rachel questioned my identification of them. I had, indeed, seen no wild dove to recognize it when I jumped to the conclusion that the cuckoo's calls must be dove notes because of their likeness to the cooing of my fantails. Aunt Rachel appealed to Uncle Pline when he came to us one Sunday and Uncle Pline said that when he was young they called the bird that made that noise a rain-crow, and that the frequent repetition of the noise was a sure sign of rain. His youth was spent in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

The reiterated kow-kow-kow of the yellow-bill is, I think, a surer weather sign than most such. I associate that croaking with warm days of July, when the air hangs heavy and humid about our full-leaved woods. It cries in my ears from breathless afternoons when showers come up quickly and pass quickly, and leave

a steaming countryside even hotter than it was before the storm. The storm has, however, refreshed the tree-toads, and they cry happily. The rain-crow is quieter after the storm than before it, but he will call, too, out of the dripping trees, but with no note of happiness in his song. It comes to me suddenly that I have never heard more than two cuckoos calling at once, and only one of the two with full voice at that, perhaps just mate answering to mate.

The rain-crow is none too easy to pick out by the eye in the tree from which he calls, whether it is before the rain or after it. He is an immobile fellow at times, and his coat of dark brown is so at one with the color of the shadowed branches that you will often have to wait for him to call again, or to flop after a caterpillar, or to fly weakly to a neighboring tree, to distinguish him in the half gloom of the high trees in which he hunts. So feeble is his flight that he often appears to be disabled, and sometimes to be *in extremis*. Yet he is hardy enough for all that. He is holding his own, I think, even in this day of starlings. There was a time I feared that the poisons we spray on all kinds of trees would lead to his death through arsenated caterpillars, but such has not been his fate.

When you have a chance to look at him closely from near at hand, the rain-crow is not so unfinished a looking bird as you think him when he labors from tree to tree, or drags himself wearily up a limb after tent worms. One cuckoo used to come often to a weeping willow that stood just by our front door. The tree's open growth and sparse leafage made it easy to watch him as he rested in it. Then you saw that although he was long and slim and seemingly weak jointed he was fairly tight feathered and of rather dapper habit in his dark brown back, reddish brown wings and white neck and breast.

The yellow-bill's nest is as unfinished as he appears to be at first sight. It is a frail affair of sticks and grass. Three of them only can I remember well. One of these had only two eggs. Their soft blue was lovely against the background of a wisp of dried grass rounded down into a slight platform of sticks. This nest

was on the outer end of a long apple limb, the lowest on a well-grown tree. The second was in our homeyard on Upsal Street, in a sassafras and just out of reach from the ground. This had in it when I discovered it one egg and one large squab. The egg disappeared after a while, leaving the squab in solitary majesty on the sticks, which were so thinly woven together and so lightly covered with grass that you could see his outline through them. The third nest had in it the full complement of five eggs, but this nest met disaster soon after I came upon it. It was in a vine of chicken grape in our hen-run. It disappeared with no sign left, but whether from marauding boy or opossum I could not tell.

There is no nest of a fairly well-distributed bird that I so seldom find. The rain-crows are, I suspect, like that other flabby creature of the woods, the opossum, wanderers over a wide territory. There may not be so many of the birds about as their far-carrying voices lead you to believe.

Our American cuckoos are not the birds of ill omen the English cuckoos are. Outside of their incessant calling being writ down as a sign of rain they have no place, so far as my experience goes, in such folklore as we have in the States. Nor have they much place in our literature, outside of the writing of our bird men. They have no such place in the poetry of America as they have in the poetry of England. Whitman lists them in *Specimen Days*, and Riley gives them a line of verse, but there is no memorable poem about them to match the dozen from "Sumer is i-cumen in" to Blunden.

1929

·HEMLOCKS·

TIME was when I should have said that the hemlock was the dominant tree of the Wissahickon Valley. Now, however, a walk from the mouth of the creek to its gorge's end at the Reading Pike will tell you that the tulip poplar outnumbers all other trees for those miles. Fifty years ago the hemlocks stood as close relatively on many hillsides as the stalks in a stand of wheat. You were never out of sight of hemlocks then in any hundred yards of the Drive, and even now there are few places from which you can see no hemlocks. There was once a noble wood of them from the site of "The Woman in the Wilderness," above Hermit's Lane on the lower Wissahickon, round the bend to the first Red Bridge on the upper Wissahickon, the bridge that is now the first stone bridge over the higher waters. Today that wood of old hemlocks is sadly decimated.

In few places, indeed, on the west bank of the creek are there thick stands of hemlock nowadays. On the east bank, however, the hemlock better resists its enemies. There are hemlocks within stone's throw of one another pretty much all the way from Rittenhousetown to Bell's Mill Road. There is a most picturesque growth of them about the jutting ridge of mica schist just above the concrete bridge to Roxborough. The trees straggle up Mom Rinker's Rock thinly, seemingly dwarfed in the scant soil there, but lusty of color. The dispersed wood of hemlocks gives a chance for the laurel and arbutus to get enough sun to thrive and to rival the hemlocks' lustiness in their low or prostrate greenery.

The forest of old hemlocks that used to be a feature of the east slope of the valley just above the Monastery is nearly all gone, some trees the victims of old age, but others killed by disease.

Above Allen's Lane, however, the hemlocks are still a feature of this slope, growing with particular luxuriance on and about the three precipitous outcrops of grey rock you pass as you north to Livezey's Lane. Old trees persist here in great vigor, and, in favorable places, large patches of young trees are growing up in great lustihead.

On a morning of snow, when you are walking upstream here, with the sun at your back, you can still see hemlocks at their best. They stand close enough for the woods to take on a half-gloom, with at long intervals a splotch of sunlight on the white woods-floor. You grow aware gradually, as your eyes become accustomed to the half-light, of the beauty of the hemlock trunks. This group of six, in one light, will be reddish brown; another group, in another light, will be old rose of trunk from the snow about their feet to the height your eye reaches as you plod forward. Still other trunks, in still another slant of light, will be rosy purple.

You can see no hemlock tree here from ground to top, but as you pass Devil's Pool you come on a perfect specimen tree fully seventy feet tall. It stands in a fairly open woods, and it is clothed for a little more than half its height with branches in utmost brilliance of green growth. The thirty feet of trunk free of branches would delight a lumberman's heart, though the suspicious nature of the lumberman would make him wonder if the tree were not wind-shaken, with cracks through its very heart. Its trunk is rosy purple in the bright sunlight, and, standing up in the wind as the tree does, its plumed top is blown free of the little dabs of snow that stick here and there to the branches of the lower hemlocks. Its great cylinder of bright green is freshly beautiful against the cloudless blue of late February. I am so close to the tree that I cannot see the pointed top with which it spires into the sky. What I am aware of is trunk of rosy purple, and great cylinder of lush and plumy green set softly against the blue of the sky, a bright light blue of softest texture.

For all the bitter cold of the day—the thermometer was only two above zero at breakfast time—there is softness everywhere,

BIRTHPLACE OF DAVID RITTENHOUSE

in light and in color and in sound. I leave the footpath and make my way down to the flat by the creek's edge. The stream runs full, a roily grey-green, with that smell one always associates with fishing, that streamside smell known and loved from childhood. All the tops of the deciduous trees on the stream bank, as I look upstream, are soft purple; all the woods-floor here just within the hemlocks, a soft dull white; all the sky, as I look up, a soft blue. The moan of the wind in the hemlocks is soft, too, softer and less sad than the old moan of the sea. Less sad, I have said, but it is not sad at all, only lulling, freeing, driving out of memory all that is not tonic, that is not healing, that is not reconciling.

Just above Valley Green, I cross the creek on the "county bridge," built 1832, to the west bank and the Drive. From this point of view I catch the hemlocked hillside that extends toward Hartwell Avenue in a light different from any I have seen this morning. With the sun on them the hemlocks look from this angle a dull bronze, a dull bronze without softness. From here on to the end of the park there are some stands of fairly old hemlocks that look thriving, and some patches of young trees, but no such stands as those I passed from Allen's Lane to Valley Green.

Just above Thomas's Mill Road, however, they make an effect different from any other in all the valley. Here the ledges of log-like rock extend to the very edge of the water. These ledges make a couple of great steps as they come down to the creek. If you follow the path that runs along the lower step you find yourself in a green gloom. The hemlocks stand so thick just above the water that little light can filter through them. Above you are green pendulous boughs of deep green. On the rock under your feet is green moss. On the rock to your side is green moss and grey-green lichen. Just below you is water deep green with algae. You might be in primeval woods, so virgin and unspoiled is all about you.

Beautiful as the hemlock is in its grace of drooping branches, when looked at from within its own shadow, and beautiful as a stand of it is looked down upon from above, from a high bridge, it

cannot be numbered among the kindly trees. It is not, for one thing, often found close by the homes of men. The ground in which it loves best to grow is not often that the pioneer chose to clear and cultivate. Individual hemlocks may be found in good soil, and backwoodsmen, no doubt, sometimes fashioned log houses by a hemlock of the virgin forest growing in thin land. But a house by a hemlock left standing when a farm was cleared was not common. Nor were hemlocks often planted by houses, as white pines were, or balsams, or Norway spruces. Close by where I live a hemlock of the Wissahickon's original forest was left by a lane that divided two properties running back from the Philadelphia Pike to Township Line West, and a house built near that tree in 1888. The hemlock lingered on in its old age until 1925, and it was cut down shortly afterwards. It had been gradually dying for more than ten years.

Nor is the hemlock a kindly wood in the open fireplace. It cracks as it burns, sending out showers of live sparks that are destructive of clothes and rugs. Nor does it last long or give out much heat. There is plenty of it comes our way hereabouts, though, for the joists of many houses were of hemlock, and after white pine became scarce hemlock took its place as the cheap lumber for sheathing and fencing and board walks.

Hemlock is not a friendly tree, either, to the birds and little beasts. It does not, like apple tree or white oak, red maple or birch, provide holes in which the creatures may nest. I have known flickers to drive their shafts into stumps of dead hemlocks, but I never knew a crow to nest in a hemlock top, or any small bird to saddle a nest on one's lateral branches or to swing a nest from their outer ends. You do not come on old hemlocks with bark scuffed off or smoothed by visiting animals, opossums or raccoons or squirrels.

There is something wild, isolated, apart from the life of man, in a hemlock. Little brown creepers will search its bark from woods-floor until that bark smooths out toward the treetop, and kinglets will explore its waving and frond-like branch tips, and I

have seen rosy crossbills by the score feeding on its cones. Such bird visits are infrequent, though. Generally it lifts lonely and tenantless, a thing of perfect grace, wholly in harmony with its situation, and beautiful at all seasons. In old days I have traversed great stands of hemlocks in the Pennsylvania mountains that were so free of underbrush you could steer a course through them by a compass almost in a straight line. There nothing more serious impeded your progress than a fallen branch or a hobble-bush. I have walked miles through such a forest without hearing a bird note, or a squirrel chatter, and without getting up a big hare, or even a mouse. Here, in the Wissahickon, deserted of animal life though they be, the hemlocks are generally in such close proximity to water or to trees attractive to birds and beasts that you will see squirrel or woodpecker somewhere in their neighborhood. Yet in themselves they are unvisited and lonely, and of a kind of proud aloofness.

1929

X

For JOHN COOPER MENDENHALL

because of many talks on Pennsylvania's yesterdays . . .

OF HEATHS *and* HEATHY PLACES

THE heaths are shrubs of wild and waste places. They flourish on mountain and interval, on bog and barren, on land that man has not tamed, or that, having tamed, he has abandoned as not worth the fight to keep tillage or pasture. No long domesticity has endeared the heaths to him. Use and wont have not given their flowers that something more than beauty they have given to the lily and the rose. And yet the heaths are dear to man, and will grow dearer with the years, now that rhododendron border and rock-garden and wall are taking their place in our lives. Rhododendron beds there were in colonial days and fine specimen plants have been praised in times more remote, but the border with its great rhododendrons, undergrown with lesser heaths, is hardly older than our generation. Nor has the rhododendron yet, for all the laureate's love and acclaim of it, a place in talk or writing even remotely approaching that of holly or box, gale or cherry laurel, to compare it only with the more usual broad-leaved evergreen shrubs.

As it is with the rhododendrons, so it is with the azaleas and andromedas, the kalmias and clethras. They have not been man's familiars long enough to take place among his cherished shrubs. That I must refer to so many of them by these book names is proof of what little part they have had in our daily lives. From the first settling of America arbutus has been hunted for at the edge of the retreating snow, and the pinker blooms of "wild honeysuckle" have been given place by apple blossoms and lilacs in the front

window, but there are few of our heaths so honored. Laurel, perhaps. But even "laurel" does not bring up one shrub to all to whom it is named. In Pennsylvania, for instance, the native rhododendron is "deer-tongue laurel" to some; to others just "laurel," as is the kalmia to more. "Calico bush," for the kalmia is local, too; and to how many does a known and loved shrub visualize itself when I say "staggerbush"?

Arbutus, of course, is the best known of our heaths, and most loved of all wild flowers of the woods. That is as it should be. Its early blossoming, its scent so fresh in its sweetness, its pink and white that are dearest of all hues to man—because of these arbutus has come to be loved in America as no other shrub about which cling no ancestral memories. Known but three hundred years, its only rivals to States' folks are the roses and lilies that men have praised since love of beauty has been.

Arbutus is spread widely enough in America, for all its absence from the far west and southwest, to be well known; though there are many who associate it only with New England. "Where else than New England could mayflower grow?" indignantly objected an old gentleman of Boston who was shown a box of arbutus from North Carolina. He settled that heresy out of hand, talking down ruthlessly the humble recipient of those blooms, who tried to hold to his belief that they were, as the postmark told, from Asheville. Perhaps, after all, the old gentleman was right, for it is arbutus, not mayflower, outside of New England. So well known is arbutus, indeed, it no more needs praise than "wild honeysuckle" or rhododendron.

All our native varieties of those heaths are now domesticated and to be found in specimen bushes on our lawns. No art of planting or care of nurture, of course, can make them here as beautiful as in their native woods. I have pleasure out of my "deer-tongue laurels" from Valley Forge, here at home in my heathbed, but what is that to the joy I have had out of their fellows by clear creeks high in the Poconos. There I remember a place in which great hemlocks pillar a lofty isle of green gloom over amber water,

water sluicing down to break in creamy-white spray against the brown ledges of its bed. Everywhere among the hemlocks, bare of branches for half of their hundred feet, tall rhododendrons lift crowns of bloom, pale white in the half light, as far as the eye can reach along the mountainside.

With that memory comes another of earlier years and a later hour. At seven of an evening of early July we leave Waterford—Jeff Ferguson, Walter and I—to bring in the huckleberries that the pickers have gathered back in the Tuscaroras. It is day still in the open valley, but twilight the minute we enter the old tannery road by the stream. It is a veritable tunnel of rhododendrons, this road, a tunnel whose arch is white bloom. Away ahead of us it extends, a whiteness almost like a shaft of mist, for it is now too dark for individual crowns of flowers to differentiate themselves in the half light. On and on we go until the old white horse stumbles in the creek bed of a road and the gig comes to a sudden stop. Our talk stops with the wheels; Jeff pulls the old horse to his feet again, his shoes striking sparks from the stones; Jeff gets out to listen to his breathing, which is so stertorous it shakes the wobbly two-wheeler. As we wait for the horse to pull himself together again, our talk dies down, and I hear a thin whirl of song from the thicket to our left. No sooner am I aware of that whirl than I hear another, and another, and then another. More veeries than I can distinguish are singing from the whiteness. That whiteness cannot all be from the flowers. There is mist from the creek below, no doubt, and—now I understand: the moon is up! Just here the hemlocks are gone, victims to the dismantled tannery above, so the light is free to fill all this hollow of white bloom.

I had only a minute to know it all, the swathe of white bloom, misty under the moonlight, and the faint skirling of the veeries, but twenty-eight thronged years have not had power to crowd that minute out of mind. Its quiet seconds done, we started again, and soon we were haggling over four or five cents a quart for huckleberries. On our way home we passed again that enchanted open on the mountain, but we were too busy with our berries to

heed it. They were under the seat in cans, about our feet in baskets, in a crate the two boys of us held in our arms.

Huckleberries are, of course, heaths, and, for all the cheeriness of mountain cranberries, the heath whose fruit is most beautiful. In many places I have plundered their plenteous stores, from these mountains of southern Pennsylvania by Waterford on north to the slopes above the Gaspereau. Their varieties are many, but none of them to me so appealing as the low blueberries of granite ledges on our northern mountains. How cool and refreshing the blueberries look once they are really blue. Drinkers of dew and cloud, their frosty bloom eases one's thirst at sight, even in the full sun-blaze of bare Alpine heights, and goes not a little way toward slaking it, once on the lips.

Our New World boasts no heather ale, but such stretches of heathy land as it has have their moments of bacchanal. If you know any mountain community in the East you know the unrest that seizes upon its people once huckleberries are ripe. Earlier, in late June, Coleman left your chimney half built for three days or four because he must get his hay in. But now, in mid-July, you may whistle in vain for him week after week. He is off berrying on the Tobyhanna Barrens, team, tent, and long family with him, and there he will camp, now on dry ridge and now by swamp-side, as long as there are berries to pick. It is not only that, with the family's help, Coleman can make more berrying than by working at his trade, but that the free life appeals to him. Twenty dollars a day for picking berries is not bad for a family, even if parents and children all pick together and such a harvest comes but one day out of three. Better than the money to him, maybe, is the indulgence in that instinct for breaking away in midsummer, that has led, in so many countries, to midsummer madness of one kind and another. License of a kind associated with harvest festivals everywhere is no more peculiar to the Tobyhanna Barrens than to any other berrying place, but you will find it there. Whiskey is not forgotten when the family goes gypsying, by Coleman, or by any of his neighbors who seek the barrens; and the money they

all make so quickly has its inevitable solvent effect upon the conventions. When the pocket is full the soul must soar. This is the year's heyday for such people of the Poconos as are wild-blooded, and they do not let it pass without due indulgence. For the men there is, too, the two weeks for deer in the fall, but that is only for the men, and that outing brings no such fatness to the family purse as does berrying.

And bother the moralist. Does not the world know that you must have plenty of whiskey with you on the barrens berrying, for there are rattlesnakes there. They are there only too truly, and no outing but leaves for the winter its tales of escapes and strikings.

There is thus just that little of danger on the barrens without which the experience of berrying would hardly be an adventure. It might be even that you would chance upon that other berrier, the black bear, though there are ten rattlers there to every bear, each ten times more dangerous. There is enough of thrill, for the children at any rate, to make each day worth talking over round the supper fire. Memories of it all persist long, of the fun it was to see the store of purple fruit growing in the great tins; of the singing on hot afternoons, when one camp started up "Throw out the Life-Line," and another took it up, and another and another, until it rang, with a truly bacchanal ecstasy, along the whole of Seven Pine; of great white nights, when auroral fires flamed from the Catskills to the Water Gap, and boy and girl stole out together with that wild glow in them that was their ancestors' on St. John's Eves long centuries dead.

Had it scent, laurel would be the flower to rival arbutus among our American heaths. As it is, laurel is only less cared for,—that is, its showiest form, *Kalmia Latifolia.* Sheep laurel, of course, is feared on all the thousand hills that are sheep pasture. Pale swamp laurel is little known, and, as it is magenta, unlikely to charm men as its pink and white fellow. The calico bush, it is true, is not always pink and white, but sometimes, in deep mountain woods, pure white; and sometimes, as on the desert-like "plains" of New

Jersey, a deep pink that persists in a pink flush even until the flowers fall. No other heath, not even the flame azalea of the Carolina Mountains, masses itself in such banks as our laurel. Where mountain woods have been completely cut off, as in some places, for mine props, in the valley of the upper Susquehanna, there will be literally miles of laurel. Come upon such a mountain-side of bloom, broad acres of white pink-flushed, and you will remember it as you will full blow of bloom on the appled slopes above Grand Pré.

Laurel is plundered not only for its bloom in early summer, but for its bright evergreen foliage in winter. Ropes of laurel leaves are draped around public halls on high days and holidays from December to March, and at Christmas countless bushes are sacrificed to wreaths that the gradual exhaustion of holly is bringing more and more into vogue.

Though all of us who care for our laurel know that it is far other than the old-world shrub that crowned the victor, a part of our joy in it is from its storied name. Yet the miner's child who sells close-crowded bunches of it to you on train platform at Hazleton or Scranton has no such association. Nor, for all his ancestry, has the city Greek who sells you a forced plant of it at Easter. To each, laurel is simply a something to sell, but no less a thing of beauty for that. And to all it should be no less a thing of beauty because it is also a thing of traffic. You cannot vulgarize laurel by any commerce in it, or by any nurture of it, with manure and heat and moisture, for instance, as you may vulgarize lily or rose. In greenhouse or in shrubbery, on station platform or on the city curb, laurel remains always itself of the woods.

It is difficult for us who have known laurel from childhood to know just when our care for it grew greater because of our associations with the name it bears. Just when did we learn of "laurel and bays"? One at one time, one at another. One from father or mother, another from teacher or school reader. We can no more tell just how and when the associations with the name laurel deepened our pleasure in the shrub laurel than we can tell just

when and how the sound of its name deepened our pleasure in it. Suffice it that the shrub and its name, and our associations with both, are wedded in a unity of appeal that it is the privilege of few shrubs to impart.

A lesser heath of the Appalachian ledges is the wintergreen. It is not so distinctive of high reaches of weathered granite as are the blueberries, but by no woodland roadside or clearing in the woods have I found it to so flourish as there. Often the little tri-leaf will guard three full-fruited berries, and two berries are, in right seasons, as common as one. Rising out of the grey-green lichens of the ledges the cheery red of the berries glads the eye, with whose harvest of them you had better be content. Succumb to their heartening color and tempting plumpness, pluck and eat, and aromatic though they are and resurrective of memories of childhood's beloved teaberry candy, the taste will, nine chances out of ten, disappoint in itself and recall tooth powder more incessantly than sweets.

Wintergreen, too, was once a prize of the hunters of wild fruit, and, like sarsaparilla and spruce gum, helpful at eking out the back-woodsman's little store of actual money. He collected wintergreen and sent it off to the city, getting cash for it, and not credit at the store, as for mine props or huckleberries. But now, in the country I know, wintergreen is no longer gathered for the market, artificial flavors no doubt having been substituted for it by the confectioner. So, more and more, it is left to flourish in its haunts, a harvest for birds and for the eye of the wood-loving.

A far different fate is that of that other red-berried heath, the cranberry. It, I know, will be held by many as no more to be written of than Christmas. The cranberry is of the best of things, established, known, accepted by all. Why say more about it, then? To say no more is wisdom, perhaps, and the way of him who says more beset by platitudes. But is such not, too, the plight of him who would praise holly, holly which man cannot cease to praise?

Cranberries, of course, are to many but a garnish of the table, and holly to most the very sign and symbol of the winter's highest

hour. And yet the one is hardly more essential to the season than the other. It is not, however, as a garnish to the table and no more that I would praise the cranberries. Because they are that, they are now a crop in whose cultivation men have made millions. Swamps in New Jersey and their contiguous sand barrens, what men call waste places, now bear the blossoms and fruit of cranberries over wide and busy acres. But it is not these cranberries of commerce that are all the cranberries. Let us accept these cranberry bogs as that without which delectable things that now are easy of attainment would be difficult—cranberry sauce, cranberry jelly, cranberry tart. And then let us turn to the cranberries in the wild places, the cranberries of the lowland swamps, the cranberries of the summits of bare mountains.

It is a day of late August under Toadback, windy, autumnal, of few flowers. At the head of the broad interval a cold bog pours spring water into Cold Brook, a bog where are most of the flowers the time of the year may boast. Hardhack spires there above the bog-cotton, old rose above its grey-green sheath of leaves. Turtlehead, pink mouthed, is there, and asters of pale blue and deep blue-purple, and ragged fringed orchids and certain goldenrods and loosestrifes and evening primroses. And here, on the swamp's edge, is a tuft of cranberries; of ripe fruit, a few; of green fruit, a plenty; of pale pink flowers of recurved petals, as many as if it were June. Vigorous runners of deep green are being pursued by younger runners of lighter green out through the sphagnum and sundew and grasses, runners just as beautiful as those of the bearberry we laboriously try to establish in our pampered beds of hybrid rhododendrons. Not recognizing it as the plebeian cranberry, maybe, you pluck of it and bring home to preserve a while in the flat dish of drenched moss of your living-room table. The cranberry is worthy that place just as surely as is the linnea or Indian pipe or pipsissewa, or any other of the little treasures of the woods.

But if you reject this cranberry as plebeian, you cannot so dispose of the mountain cranberry. Try for that some day you are on

Alandar of the Berkshires or Chocorua of the Sandwiches. Let it be some still September morning of full sun, a morning after rain, if you would find the berries plump and bright. Do not look for the close-crowding, prostrate leafage, dark green and leathery, until you are out on the ledges where all the growth is low. But when, say, you are close to the top of Chocorua and your heart sufficiently dwarfed by all that splendor of wild mountains to make you seek the comfort of little winsome things, begin to look about for the mountain cranberry. Right below you, where you sit on the Cow, you will see a mass of tufted leafage, rising nowhere more than six inches from the rock floor of the ledge. Look further and you will see here and there a glint of red under the dark green. Climb down and lift the short, thick leaf-sprays and the red berries will be yours for the picking. Quite different they look now against the silvery green of the under sides of the little leaves, not so bright and holly-like as they did from above. Start picking them and you will be surprised at the number you can gather without shifting your position.

Brought home and stored in a Mason jar, the mountain cranberries will delight you until they go into the pan for sauce. To me they are not so palatable as their larger relatives of the commercial bogs, though from their situation they ought to have more taste. They do not grow, as do their lowland kin, with their feet in the water, but in the dry shallow peat gathered in the clefts and hollows of the ledges. Night on night, of course, they are bathed in the clouds that cap Chocorua, and rainfall is frequent there, too, but the full sun-blaze of midday quickly dries out the scant earth the mountain cranberries root in, and seems, somehow, to leach out the taste they ought to have. Perhaps in other situations they are better flavored. Surely they must be, or they would not be so treasured as they are to the northward where they grow in the lowlands. And yet it may be that Swede and Russian remember them because there is scant harvest of other berries in the northlands to which they penetrate—rock candy was loved in the old days when other sweets were rare.

Very like in stem and leaf and habit of growth to the mountain cranberry is the creeping snowberry. But its place of growth is as different as may be. The mountain cranberry is a lover of high ledges open to the sun. The creeping snowberry is a lover of dark woodlands free of underbrush. It was in an old spruce wood facing north on steep climbing Passaconaway that I came first on the creeping snowberry. It was so little, the patch of it, but you could not miss it on that bare needled floor, against whose subdued purples its green was distinct and arresting. It seemed old there in the half-light, the little creeping thing, old and sturdy, like dwarf pines on a mountain top, its one white berry emphasizing by its deadness of color the gloomy extent and tallness of the forest. Though it is the berry that gives it its name, that berry is by no means the whole charm of the plant. Those ground-plastered stems of woolly brown, with leaves as prostrate as themselves, give you from first meeting that sense of lastingness in littleness that cannot disassociate itself from the snowberry. Those tiny leaves are thick for their size, which is about that of a mouse's eye; and evergreen you know the shrub at a glance. No one of those leaves may more than cover the half of the full-formed berry they try to hide. Yet despite their prominence the berries persist on into autumn and even until spring. I have found them in abundance high up on the edges of the great col that joins Whiteface and Passaconaway, on October days when the woods-floors were as busy with southing birds as they were with swirling leaves, thrushes and white-throats and juncos; and when, high above on the spruce tops, grosbeaks ambled about parrot-like, plumbing the depths of those dark solitudes with their shafts of song. The birds, indeed, cannot care greatly for the faint flavor of the snowberry, a flavor like wintergreen but at once sharper and less decided, or one would not find so many of them from the time of their forming in June on until the plants bloom again in the following May. Those little white bells, their flowers, are a prize to long for, as dainty in their close clinging as the linnea nodding on hair-like stems in every puff of air astir on the woods-floor.

Like so many of the heaths, Labrador tea has, too, associations with the table. Its name is because its astringent leaves were used, in America's early days, in lieu of the Chinese tea it was such a journey to procure. Personally I have no association with it as the basis of any brew. My first meeting with it precludes forever any such association. Labrador tea shall be always to me a shrub first found on a day of glory. After weeks of rain and dark weather, ending with a day that had in it something of the Southland's enervating humidity and heat, the wind turned north. The stars flared out that night in hosts, but until late the young moon dimmed them. The wind was blowing them all to flare when I was wakened with it rocking the house, sometime before dawn.

It was a real mountain day that the wild dawn heralded, this eighteenth of August, a day worthy of the Sandwich Highlands, a day to climb. Our wildest, least frequented mountain, Old Shag, lured us that morning of galloping wind, wind of the north, wind that drummed the spruce forests until they resounded like beaches beaten by great seas.

The woods were empty of all save the wind. It reached down into them, swept them as clean of all close airs as if they were no higher than the timothy and red-top of the intervals. The woods were empty of all save the wind and the sun. The sun found its way deep down into the woods, cheering them, making them sweet as open uplands, tonic, heartening, freeing, not oppressing, with their wildness.

Halfway up Old Shag we came on the slash opposite Chocorua, letting in upon us all that massive fellow's western slopes, purple on more shoulders than green since the devastating fires of May. Alpine the burned slopes seemed in their royal purple, Alpine almost as the bare ridges above them yellowly white there in the blazing sunlight.

All this blowing royal morning I was hugging to heart hope that some of the little bogs of Old Shag were holding for me Labrador tea, which I had looked for in vain in all the likely bogs elsewhere that I knew. Peaty hole on peaty hole I explored for the

ledum without the coveted luck. But we were hardly in the cold little bog of sweet still water just below the summit than I saw it, very low and stunted, not a stem more than twelve inches above the sphagnum, but Labrador tea beyond the shadow of a doubt. I could scarcely have had greater joy had I come on it in bloom, as I was to in later days, the cool white heads of flowers garlanding the hardy little plants. Three thousand feet up it was, but lusty from bare stem on the bog-top to fullgrown young leaves of dark green two hand-spans above. These young leaves were white-woolly within their turned-under edges, the leaves of last year brown-woolly below like the stems.

It was in plenty here in the little bog's less than an acre, sending its roots down into the cool peat below the sphagnum, peat water-soaked this wet season like the moss itself. Two months earlier the Labrador tea had been in flower, livening the dim light of the spruce-shaded swamp as the white azalea does other swamps to the southward. That white azalea was brought to my mind because with the ledums were pitcher plants, which I have always associated with viscosa. The ledum, though, perhaps because of its being an evergreen, seems somehow more choice and rare. It lacks, of course, the scent that so often tells you before you see it that the white azalea is at hand, but it has the charm of hardiness and austerity that the white azalea cannot offer. Maybe, too, I have a feeling of choiceness and rareness in the Labrador tea because of its resemblance to the little fragrant Labrador rhododendrons, treasures much cherished when come on upon Washington or Lafayette, by all who truly love the heaths.

To no heath has it fallen to inspire such words as has the rhodora. One day of April it stirred Emerson to "Beauty is its own excuse for being." Why, who shall say? One may guess it was because of the glow of light in its bloom. No other flower of our northern woods has in it such a glow. Its mauve purple quickens into motion, it seems, as you watch it, even if there is no wind. It takes, indeed, a wind of some power to move the stiff stems of

rhodora, though its delicate butterflies of bloom will tremble into a likeness to flight even in a little stir.

It may be it was not common where Emerson walked, and the wonder of strangeness stirred him. It may be it was by many run-sides that he passed, but that this day there fell suddenly the scales from his eyes, and he saw it first for what it is. It is thus it grows, in one place a rare shrub, in another banking the roadside. It is seldom, though, a prodigal. Once I saw an acre of it, in full bloom, in a swamp high in the Poconos, but never elsewhere have I seen it lighting bog or barren with such excess as is usual to "wild honeysuckle" or laurel. Its disposition in typical Sandwich intervals is a clump now and a clump again, at such distances as lure you on and on, to delight now in this clump and now in that.

After the bloom falls the rhodora is not a beautiful shrub, a low dome of grey-green in summer, about the size of a muskrat house and of no particular distinction of leaf. Through autumn, too, it remains inconspicuous, proffering no such splendors of color as do most of our deciduous heaths.

There is no family of plants that combines beauty of bloom and beauty of foliage as do the heaths. The evergreen ones have distinction all the year round. It is as surely theirs flowerless as flower-laden. In some this distinction is in color of leaf, in others in shape of leaf, in still others in the grouping of leaf with leaf. The rhododendrons, indeed, are so fortunate as to have distinction of all these sorts, and the added appeal of brown stems, clean-cut and austere, within the varying green of their foliage. They have all that restraint and simplicity of growth that the northern heart delights in. They are as far from the weedy and tropical as may be. And this is true the whole evergreen group through. The prostrate mountain cranberry and the moss-like White Mountain heath will arrest you just as surely as the laurels and rosebays as large as trees.

Some of the deciduous heaths, too, have distinction, andromedas for one. In spring array, with flesh-hued young leaves and white bells of bloom breaking from gnarled stems that tell of slow

growth and strength and durability, the staggerbush proclaims its kinship to rhododendron and laurel. But it is in the fall that not only the staggerbush but all the great tribe of huckleberries come to their glory of color. Here a swamp, royal under clouded skies in the old red of its low billberries, grows to richer splendor as the sun pierces through. Here a roadside through woods holds the salmons and flushed yellows and old rose of its andromedas as firmly as a Persian rug. There a mountainside flaunts its crowding sorrel-trees only less proudly than were it sap-woods or a wild of scrub oak.

Heath, the word, is to me symbol of place rather than of plant. It is an old-world place that the word conjures up, a place of low growth, of broad views that end in the greyness of distance, with no sharp outlines of mountains against the sky. It is a place in which you are everywhere and always aware of the sky: it is a place old and lonely and desolate. Such heaths are few in my happy hunting grounds between the Appalachians and the sea, necessarily few everywhere in our New World. I have experienced some sense of a heath on the Gloucester moors, and inland Nantucket and the Jersey "plains" have moments like those an English heath brings to you. Perhaps it is the nearness of the sea that brings to you in these places that sense of age so integral a part of your feelings on a heath, perhaps only that insistence of the sky so constant to sea and desert spaces. They are pitilessly old, both, the sea and the sky, so homeless, so devoid of all that brings comfort and shelter.

It so happens that most times I have visited our Jersey "plains," they have, through their chance wintriness of weather, deepened the impression of age that breadth of sky and nearness of sea breed in me there. It was grey and overcast that day I first passed the cedars and clethras of Long Cripple, and its rare schizeas, and came out upon the long upward sweep of "plains" toward Cedar Bridge and Barnegat. Pixy and lizards and sand-myrtle had offered experiences new to my days afield as we made our way through the pine barrens southeastward from Woodmansie, but

no experience so alien to our Eastern countryside as this of the "plains."

Beyond the creek, in whose cedars warblers were noisy above brown water wimpling against the spikes of golden club—beyond this place of movement and color and glad sound, the desert of white sand stretched on and upward, greying deeper and deeper as its sparse cover of blackjack and pitchpine gathered thicker with the distance. Grey clouds hung low over the greyness of the "plains." The light itself was grey as from a sun grown old, but the chill air abroad was fresh with the scent that is all compound of quickness and youth, the scent of arbutus. Search by the side of the straight trackway that was our road brought us to patches of the sweet shrub. They were little patches, little because of the fires that run wild here oftener than the every seven years they are fabled to be due. The arbutus plants were little, but wonderfully luxuriant in this white dry sand, many of their flowers a deep pink against the dull green of leaf or clear white of sand. In some places the sand was drifting in over the leaves, so that I found only blossoms visible of the plant, bright pink against its white.

In few places were the little oaks more than waist high and nowhere the pitch pines any higher. The pines, indeed, were often but shrubs, branches sprawling across the sand or sprays rayed up from a round wooden bole to no more than knee height. Barren heath was everywhere in patches but as yet its "honey of wild flame" had not begun to creep up from its prostrate stems to those that held themselves above the sand. Its scant foliage of sage-grey was, too, suggestive of age, and there was little more youth to the green of the crowberry, to whose short tops, however, clung here and there the purple anthers of its flowers.

There were no longer on the "plains," as there had been in the peaty hollows in the barrens, low banks of sand-myrtle, almost more beautiful at this season in their pinky buds than with bloom fully expanded into just flushed white flowers. Pixy, however, was still to be found, many of its mats of white stars cut off from the sand only less white by a fringe of newer moss ruddy brown from

the previous autumn's coloring. To other mats the fringe was bright green, a brighter green than was that of any other plant in this grey expanse.

Passed by now, too, were the banks of leatherleaf, white-belled and lovely; and the taller staggerbushes with pink-flushed bells; but certain of the huckleberries still persisted in this dry waste. Here and there, too, were clumps of laurel, taller, some of them, than either oaks or pines, and close set with buds that proved, as did acorn cups and pine cones, how congenial a home this is to many plants.

Even colder and greyer was the day of my second visit to the "plains." Though but two years older the sandy waste had aged at least a century. The road to Long Cripple was traversed daily in 1914, in 1916 but seldom, as only three caretakers and seven martins and the thinnest hound of my experience were now domiciled at the stricken swamp. It had been ravaged of all its cedar, even down to that fit only for lath, but the cutting had allowed more room and sun for magnolia and sweet-pepper bush, which were shooting up freely over the sphagnum-flanked stumps.

So cold and sullen a day was it that not a single lizard was abroad. So far removed from the world was it all that the old voice of the wind in the pines seemed to be crying that it was the very wind was breathed upon the face of the waters when the world began to be. But the white mats of pixy, red set or green set, were there to gladden the heart, and the greater mats of bearberry bore buds that promised beauty. And the strangeness and outland savor of it all, the plants long known of, but not seen until now, so stirred my friend that he ran around with a boy's glee crying aloud this discovery and that, heartening the waste as surely as did the rare song of chewink or rattle of downy. This day as before I had joy in sand-myrtle and arbutus—good heaths both, and the unsung as winning in all but scent and associations as that the world knows.

The full sun of mid-May flooded the barrens the next day I

sought Long Cripple. Arbutus and pixy were fallen this day, but the broad swathes of sand-myrtle in the hollows made a show that compensated for all the earlier beauty that was gone. Here and there were plants whose little crowns of flowers were pink flushed, and lovelier than any can tell against their background of burnished little leaves, box-like in their evergreen primness.

Why sand-myrtle has been so little praised is not to be accounted for, since it is a plant not only of these outland reaches of Jersey but of the sandy wastes just back from the coast on southward to Georgia. It grows, too, far up on the southern mountains, and in this heyday of the Alpines you would expect it to have come into its own. It has, too, been long if not generally in cultivation. Princes included it in their catalogue of sixty years ago as Ledum Myrtifolium, and no real rock gardener of Europe but lists it as desirable. Desirable it is, and I have joy of it in my own heathbed, but here in its home, where it spreads itself broadcast in all proper situations in heatherlike profusion, is the place to know its very self. "Hardy, lusty in old age, most heatherlike of our heaths," I exclaim each time I come upon it. And yet, save when its blooms spread rod on rod away through the barrens, it look little enough like the old-world heather, either in leaf or habit of growth. You oftenest find it among other shrubs, snake-berry and sweet fern, say, or huckleberries, and but rarely specimen plants. Among the other shrubs, and in bloom, it is likest to heather, for all that its flowers turn upward in ledum-like crowns. In a specimen plant, where it has had a chance to grow unmolested by fire or rival shrub, the sand-myrtle domes up maybe two feet high and three feet across, looking for all the world, in the distance, like a pushed-down and flattened-out dwarf box. Its foliage, of course, is darker, and more diminutive, and leathery, and less close-crowded at the ends of the shoots, but it is to a box you would compare it, first, last, and all the time. Such a specimen plant, half in bud, half in blow, with pinky-white bloom against its background of dark green, once seen, will return again and again to

delight your inner eye. And with the memory of the plant, comes often for me, the peaty smell of the barrens, the old cry of the wind in the pines, the sagging grey skies far spread over all. That pinky-white bloom above lusty green leafage and grey twisted stem is symbol sure to me of youth, tenderness, spring, shattering the grey old world.

June brings the white azalea into bloom on the swampy edges of the barrens, and July the sweet-pepper bush, so that there are no days hereabouts without heathbloom from April through August. There are few days, indeed, without heath fragrance on the piney air, for the arbutus is hardly gone when the azalea begins to loose little drifts of sweetness that now are with you and now are gone, and there are, indeed, the faint exhalations from the black huckleberries to bridge the interval. Before the long-blooming white azalea is gone the even more persistent clethra has come to fill all the swamps with its spicy fragrance, and as long as summer is, it continues to bloom.

It is, then, with these heaths of a countryside as near to a heath as we have in America, that I would take leave of the family of wild shrubs I like best. They are not, as I have said, the flowers that man loved earliest, if we are to believe the old records. Those were flowers of the fields rather than of the wilds. Before lily and rose, no doubt our ancestors held dear daisy and buttercup. It must have been that they cared most for those flowers that were symbols of security and plenty; those that grew easily in the cleared places about their homes, the cleared places that made sudden surprise less possible to their enemies and yielded them the grain and roots necessary to their sustenance.

Yet, as I have said, even without familiarity from old times, the heaths are dear to man, and that not because of any strange or exotic beauty of theirs. They are most of them modest enough, in that respect among flowers what sparrows are among birds. There is no flauntingness to most of them, though one of them, the flame azalea of our southern mountains, blazons forth its

beauty as boldly as does the cardinal. On the whole they are retiring, the heaths, lovers of wood and dark bog, high pastures and mountain tops, sandy wastes open to the sky, with delicacy, rareness, choiceness as their portion.

1916

·THE FIELD SPARROW·

IT IS given to the sparrows, I think, to hold next place to the thrushes in the affections of men. They are, so many of them, dooryard birds, some in summer, some in winter, some all the year round. They are so trustful of man, as trustful in times of plenty as in times of want. They are so domestic in their habits, finding their food in garden and lawn and farmyard. They are so constant in their presence about the house. At night when half the grackles and robins seek roosts at a distance, the sparrows settle to their rest in box-bush by the doorway or in the honeysuckles under the eaves. They are so homey and folksy in their ways, only the robin or wren seeming to have as many human attributes as song-sparrow or white-throat or chippy. They are so sweet of song, and so suggestive of home in calls and twitters. They are habited in so soft hues of brown and grey that they are wholly consonant in color with our country's puritan austerity of taste. House wren or grackle, pewee or barn swallow, may be dearer to this man or that than any sparrow, but as a family only the thrushes have won a place so close to the hearts of all our native born.

Even the sparrows that less often visit the dooryard are associated with the daily lives of men. The farm-boy going for the cattle at summer sundown hears all about him on the bare pastures the evening chorus of the vesper sparrows. The suburbanite clerk city-ward bound on a morning of winter thaw wonders what may be the minor strain he hears at this time so unseasonable for song,

> That far lonely silvern strain
> Piercing the silence of the rain,

the notes, of course, of the white-throat.

The field sparrow you will meet in the dooryard more often

than either vesper sparrow or white-throat, though he seldom grows as familiar as the chipping sparrows, who will come into your dining room and pick up crumbs from under the table. The field sparrow visits me often as I work in the garden, to feed on the aphidae that swarm on the late peas. I first hear him, in the spring, in the open field southeastward of my home. Thither he comes late in March or early in April, before the wood's edge begins to flush with green. There it is, too, that I see him last in October, among the briars and low bushes, at the end of his more than six month's stay with us.

The nearest pair of field sparrows to this fellow and his wife haunt a similar woodside a little to the southward, close enough for me often to hear the male sing in answer to our bird. A quarter of a mile northeastward, I pass, on my way to the station, another pair domiciled on a bushy hillside above a swamp. At about such distances pairs of field sparrows are scattered up and down our Wissahickon Hills. Some few families of them do not desert us even in the winter but, finding sheltered places on the southward facing slopes, live there without privation until spring rolls round again.

There is no one kind of locality which, in my experience, the field sparrows seek out for home. Years ago I read in *Wake Robin* that Burroughs found them preferring "remote bushy heathery fields," but though I have found them in such cover, both on my home hills and on the higher hills of the Poconos, I have found them, too, all summer long, far from clearings, on burnt-over mountain tops in Monroe County and in the country of mingled woodland and lawn and garden of Philadelphia's outer suburbs.

Not only do the field sparrows linger late in the autumn about my home, but they continue to sing, though less regularly than earlier in the season, until they go south, or until hard weather sets in, to daunt those that stay with us. Looking over old bird notes of mine I find that on two successive November fourths I record "field sparrow in full song." In 1906 a group of three wintered in a little valley running down to the Wissahickon almost

within hail of my home, and in 1907 a group of five were always to be found in the same shelter. I have no December or January records of full song for either year, but I have not a few of half-song. Unfortunately I do not always note the kind of weather in which my observations are made, but one of my memories of the winter walks of the past few years is a bright morning when I came upon field sparrows in red grass and brush in the hollow of the hills. They were with juncos, all a-twitter, and they broke into half-song.

The song of the field sparrow is a little song, a trembling and lonely melody, minor certainly, but never uncheerful. This year it first fell upon my ears one morning late in our May-like March, a morning with just enough of coolness on the air to give a tang to the day. That is not, however, the sort of day I associate with my first spring hearing of field sparrow song. It has generally come to me through air heavy with spring rain, soaking rain, rain that will make ready the ground for plowing, rain that is as mellowing as April sun. In quality it is essentially a spring song, modestly ventured, but not timid, minor but not frail. An overflow of the bird's mating gladness, there is in it no echo of human passion. It is as tenderly austere as the April air through which its cadence falls. All through the mating season the song continues in its keen freshness, losing nothing of its springlike quality on mornings of midsummer or on some eve of November grown halcyon by chance.

I have watched the brown-grey maker of the song as he sat on a silvered fence-post, his chestnut-capped head back-tilted in quiet ecstasy as he sent out his few notes over the daisy field that was his home. This is a memory of a far-gone childhood, of the late afternoon of a Sunday of old years. It is a memory of the day on which I first found a field sparrow's nest. Two of that nest's eggs, bluish with faint dustings of red-brown, I still have, but the memory of the five of them in the daisy-tuft in which the nest was set, only a few inches above the ground, would be with me just as instantly if these eggs were not here. A sight like that is of the sort

I cannot forget. Other nests of field sparrows I have found in young cedar trees, in low blackberry bushes by a woodside, on the ground in open fields.

I have heard the field sparrow sing just as sweetly from a red-berried dogwood, as an October sunset burned ruddily, and deepened the glow of a westward-fronting hill of red grass. I have heard him repeat his song three times over with no interval of rest between the repetitions, but with the final trill delayed until the end of the last repetition. This performance lasted almost thirty seconds. I have not noticed that these repetitions are peculiar to any time of year, as is, for instance, the winter song of the song-sparrow. It may be they were the idiosyncrasy of one family of birds, for I have never heard them save from the field sparrows of our wood's edge.

If a bird is a songbird, most of us, I suppose, associate him primarily with his song. I know that whatever time of year you say "field sparrow" to me I hear in my inward ear his little song, so trembling and lonely, but I always think, too, of the flocks of him and his kind you get up from the roadsides in the fall. The field sparrow is predominant in numbers among such gatherings of sparrows. All of the countrywise among us have had the experience of flushing these roadside flocks. The birds get up, one after another, and throw themselves to right or left of the bushes some fifty yards ahead, to repeat the rising and hurtling when you have once more overtaken them. At a third disturbing they will like as not dash back past you to the feeding place from which you first flushed them. Such a performance as this gives me, most falls, my last glimpse of the field sparrows in number. I am haunted by the memory of the little spectacle of the birds driving back past me like blown leaves, and disappearing more quickly than the leaves even, in the cover of the fence-rows. After these flocks have gone I must content myself with the few field sparrows that winter in some warm pocket of the hills, until March is come again, and from here, there, and everywhere these virginal notes come trembling to me through the spring rain.

1908

·BIG TREES·

THE half of the big trees on the Wissahickon Hills are those that stand about the houses, or the sites of the houses, of the millers. All the houses are now gone save two, Glen Fern, the Livezey house; and the Monastery, built by the Gorgases and long lived in by the Kitchens. The Rittenhouse house, the home of the paper-makers, is still standing on Paper Mill Run, a tributary of the Wissahickon, and less than half a mile from the creek. Some of the mills on the creek, and their accompanying homes, were built as early as two hundred years ago. Some few of the trees that still stand are apparently as old as the houses they were left to shadow, or planted to shadow. One or two of these surviving trees may be older even than two hundred years.

A little while since there were four such trees about what was long called the Megargee house, which stood where Thomas' Mill Road crosses the Wissahickon west of Chestnut Hill. Of the two tulip poplars that were just before the house only one is now left to mark its site. They looked as though they had been planted there, but anyone who has had experience in transplanting tulip poplars will tell you how seldom one thrives after a transplanting. The fact that one tree leaned away from the other seemed to indicate that they must have grown in the open. Both would have been erect had they been survivors of a forest growth. It is the straight tree that survives, a veteran nearing, I should think, its second century. Back of the house, and nearer the creek, rises a very tall black oak. Close to it are box-bushes, thick-stemmed old fellows, that look as if they had been nibbled back, so short are the tufts of leafage on their twisted trunks. Judging by their thickness of stem and by their height, they are as old again as the

box-bushes of our own yard, known to be eighty-six years of age. Conditions of growth in one place and another, however, are so different that such judgment of age by analogy is no better than a guess. One wonders would the builders of the Megargee house have let the oak grow where it is had it sprung up after the garden was laid out. One cannot determine, of course, but it seems hardly likely. Perhaps this very tall tree was growing there when the house was built. It is less than two feet in diameter, but it lifts, I am sure, to more than eighty feet.

The other great tree by the Megargee house was a button-ball just to the right of the entrance to the covered wooden bridge, the last of its kind over Wissahickon. It is gone now, too, but a big buttonwood in full thrift still stands to the right of the road just as it runs out on the flat of the creek bottom.

Along the valley of the little creek that drops down into the Wissahickon by a series of little falls just to the north of Thomas' Mill Road there is drift of old beeches. Some of these trees are as much as two feet in diameter and well toward a hundred feet in height. They brighten the little valley with their trunks and branches of light grey, as do the rocks of white quartz in the creek bed. It is good, on a blowy day of March, to look out through them and on through the gap in the hills at the gorge's end into the blue distance of the Whitemarsh Valley. It is good, too, to make your way, in the sheltered hollow, by their carven and belettered trunks on down to the Wissahickon, and follow the creek by the hemlocked bank down to the covered bridge.

There are other great tulip poplars between Thomas' Mill Road and Bell's Mill Road, straight trees that look like first growth timber. Below Thomas' Mill Road, and just above Indian Rock, on this same eastern side of the valley, are a number of large trees, tallest of them all a divided beech whose main trunk soars at least a hundred feet into the air. This tree has evidently grown all its life among a thick stand of forest trees, for neither half of it has any lateral branches, and there is no spreading of its

top until it is at almost its full height. This beech grows in good soil close by the water.

Below Rex Avenue on the west bank in rich bottom-land, is a hemlock fully seventy feet tall. Although there is nothing to show that its top has been broken out, such a breaking must have occurred, for the tree is flat topped, an unusual form for such thriving hemlocks of its proportions as I know.

There are dead chestnut trees still standing here and there in the woods between Indian Rock and Devil's Pool, but no wreck of a great tree. High up on the hills, however, at Township Line and Livezey's Lane, a heavily trunked chestnut still extends great branches, bleached and gaunt, over a wide area. It is nearly five feet in diameter. I knew it in its heyday, though even then, fifty years ago, twenty-five years before the coming of the chestnut-tree disease, it thrust dead staghorn tops into the sky. It bore good nuts till the coming of the bark disease, but not so many of them as in earlier years, as its low habit of growth, with far-spreading limbs, made its clusters easy clubbing and brought it so much injury from this that its lower branches had little chance to fruit. There were always hollows in its main trunk, and in its limbs, from the time that I first knew it, in which great-crested flycatchers built year after year. It was here I first found snake-skin in their nests.

Back of this chestnut tree, nearer the Wissahickon, were once many white oaks, just below the Pipe Bridge, with large hollows in their trunks that made lodging places for raccoons. They are nearly all gone now. Nearby, to the north, along the little run that rose just above Livezey's Lane, there once stood a great tulip poplar. When I measured the girth of its stump in 1889, the tape read nine feet eight inches. Lower down Livezey's Lane, to the left, at the very edge of a field where it ran down close to the Wissahickon, was an even larger tulip poplar. It was cut down in 1887, leaving a stump just fifteen feet in circumference. Unfortunately, I did not happen round when this great tree lay prostrate, so I have not its height. It was the largest tree, taking into con-

THE WISSAHICKON AT VALLEY GREEN

sideration height, thickness of trunk, and weight of limb, that I ever came upon on these hills.

Other great trees that I measured in 1889 were a fallen hemlock back of the Livezey house that was a little over ten feet in circumference, but with top so rotted away that you could not judge what its height had been; another hemlock close by, still living, and just eight feet around and sixty feet tall; and an adjacent beech seven feet eight inches round and about as tall as the hemlock. These last two trees stood high above a younger growth of white oak and chestnut.

There are hundreds of great buttonwoods up and down the Wissahickon Valley, most of them growing near the creek. Many of these trees are three feet in diameter, and some big enough to measure the four feet through that was considered necessary to a full-sized butcher's block. Nowadays butchers' blocks are made of inch-square pieces of sugar maple fastened together immovably by a glue which holds like cement. They are square affairs, and not to be compared for a moment with the old round chopping blocks that retained the contour of the tree trunk. The park, however, has preserved the buttonwoods from such use for two generations at least. Hundreds of great trees of them are still along the creek. They are beautiful at all seasons, but at their best in winter time, when with their white limbs stretching upward against the dark green of banked hemlocks, they make an effect of white and green not to be forgotten.

Above the buttonwoods by Allen's Lane, far up on the west bank of Wissahickon, there used to be a wild cherry eight feet in girth and over eighty feet high, and a red cedar six feet two inches in girth. Both I measured in 1889 and both are gone now. There still flourishes, however, back of Valley Green Hotel, a stand of very old white oaks. The chestnut eleven feet and six inches around, which once grew with them, is uprooted now and gone to rack and ruin after its fall. Higher up the hill are several score more great oaks, some of them white oaks and some of them black oaks. There are beeches among them and a few tulip poplars and there

once were many chestnuts. The most of these, now dead of course, still stand, reduced to their main limbs but upright. It would seem that this wood must be a remnant of the virgin forest of the hills. The trees are not in close ranks, but there are few of them of a wide spread. It would seem that they are those that were left when the largest trees of the aboriginal forest were cut out for use by the early settlers on the hills. There are plenty of trees here eighty feet tall and two feet in diameter, and there are some even taller and thicker. Past them one still can catch glimpses of distant hills rounding up to the horizon, hills whose outline is broken by few houses, hills that still look as all the Wissahickon Hills looked fifty years ago.

What set me to making notes of great trees back in 1889, when I was a boy in college, was the cutting down of some trees at what is now Hortter Street and Pelham Road. I lived close by, and, noting their fall, I went over with a tape and measured their stump circumference, and then their length, as they lay on the gound. I put in the table as I made it December 22, 1889.

	Girth	*Height*	*Spread*
Red Oak	15 ft. 5 in.	90 ft. +	80 ft. +
Sassafras	8 ft. 6 in.	80 ft. +	20 ft. +
Mazzard Cherry	11 ft.	75 ft. +	75 ft. +
Dogwood	3 ft. 4 in.	27 ft. +	35 ft. +
Red Cedar	5 ft. 8 in.	50 ft. +	25 ft. +

These were all large trees for their several varieties. They were growing along one of the old lanes that separated the original allotments of land in Germantown, and they came down to us unquestionably from very old times. The mazzard, a seedling it may be from some oxheart or bloodheart set out in an orchard of old Germantown, rather indicates, I think, that these trees all grew up after the lane was opened. The great trunk of the red oak might suggest that it had come down to us from the original forest growth of these hills, but its great spread showed that it had not been a forest tree for most of its life. Red oak is, too, a quick-growing tree. This fellow, perhaps, was a sapling left when

the line for the fence was run between two lots, and the rest of the trees bird-planted from that old line fence.

I wish I had more notes from the days of my youth about old trees, but perhaps, after all, what great trees survive today on the hills is more to the point. Walking the other day from the Ridge up to my home, just back of Mom Rinker's Rock, the largest trees I passed were white oaks on the west bank below the first stone bridge on the upper Wissahickon. The largest of these great fellows leaned across the bridle path and made its way up to the light at an angle of perhaps twenty degrees from the perpendicular. It was a tree run almost wholly to trunk. It had few small branches up in the sun. It would cut into a surprisingly large amount of lumber or cordwood. There were several other white oaks almost as large, here and there in the neighborhood. Indeed this west bank of the upper Wissahickon must have once thrown a stand of white oaks beyond compare.

There is a white oak among the great trees along Township Line just in front of our home, but the three largest of them are black oaks, and it is they, with the five black oaks of the lane by our house, that make this group of trees the finest I know of anywhere on our Atlantic slope, between the Appalachians and the sea. I know giant white pines in the northern Poconos, and huge yellow birches and hemlocks on the Claybank Brook trail up Chocorua in the White Mountains. I know elms in Deerfield and in a score other towns of Massachusetts that are in their third century. I know sugar maples in sapwoods that go back to pre-Puritan times in New Hampshire. I know the William Rufus oak and its fellows in the New Forest in Old Hampshire. Yet not one of these trees, English or American, is part of such a group of great trees as these in whose shadow I live. Only the redwoods and sequoias in California of the trees that I have seen are greater trees than these.

Until yesterday there were eight great trees along Township Line, but the two chestnuts were killed by the bark disease and cut down. That was perhaps twenty years ago. Last year a storm

laid low one of the black oaks, a tree so large that four men worked a week and two men another week on it before it was reduced to cordwood. I well remember when all eight were in full vigor, within a stretch of two hundred feet, by the west side of the road. From south to north I shall enumerate them, with the diameters of the three that were cut off, and the girths of the five still standing. I measured the height of the larger chestnut when it was cut down. It was one hundred and ten feet high. The survivors are, I should say, but little less than that in height. The tree most to the southward is a black oak ten feet seven inches in girth. Next to it is the stump of a chestnut three feet two inches in diameter. Next is the stump of the black oak that blew down. It is three feet ten inches in one diameter and four feet two inches in another, at right angles to the first. Next stands a white oak with no sign of decay about it. It is eight feet seven inches in circumference. Next is the other chestnut stump. Next is a black oak ten feet two inches in circumference, and next to it another black oak just less than ten feet round. A lower willow, lightning-riven, and twelve feet four inches about, brings the row of old trees to its end, though beyond are a catalpa and a buttonwood which would, in almost any other situation, be considered big and old trees.

A stone's throw to the west is the largest tree of our neighborhood, a buttonwood twelve feet nine inches in circumference at a height of four feet above the ground, and more than a hundred feet tall. Its spread is even greater than its height, a hundred and twenty feet at least. It is rooted in the deep soil of the little valley that runs down to the Wissahickon southeast of Mom Rinker's Rock. An old fish pond is just by the tree, so its roots can never be without moisture. Lifting its great head above the old white house, it dominates the westward view from Township Line. The oldest part of this house is said to go back to the sixteen-nineties, and the tree may have been there as long as that part of the house. For years and years the golden orioles always slung their nests

from some one of its high branches, but they have not summered here for five years and more.

The great black oaks on the lane by our house are not so high, I think, as those on Township Line. They branch out at a lower height, which would seem to indicate that they grew up more in the open than the Township Line trees. Yet our lane trees hardly look like trees set out by man. The trees of the group of four by our front porch are too close together and too irregularly placed for man's planting. They are respectively from west to east twelve feet seven inches, seven feet five inches, seven feet nine inches, and ten feet two inches in circumference. Along the lane back of our house stands the fifth great black oak, some one hundred and twenty-five feet northeast of the group. This is an almost perfect specimen tree, ten feet two inches around at four feet above the ground, about ninety feet tall and of a full hundred feet spread. Its large bally top has scarcely a dead limb in it. Its great branches bend little no matter what winds blow. A thousand blackbirds could settle upon it, such are its numbers of twigs, grown up profusely since its topping by the ice storms of 1901 and 1902.

This great oak is lovely beyond conception when it is covered with pink-tipped unfolding leaves, no larger than mouse-ears, and with yellow-green tassels, in the sunlight of early May. It is a mass of brilliant flashing green in the full sunshine of midsummer noon. It is loud with the wind in its leaves until late autumn. Did they then burn red like those of the scarlet oak there would be no tree to surpass it the year round, for the spectacle of its great limbs against the winter sky speaks its strength as notably as its glittering leafage of midsummer its lustiness of life, and its pink mouse-ears and yellow tasseling its spring beauty.

Two of its descendants that I have transplanted when they were little fellows are now thirty feet tall and fifteen feet tall respectively, and in strength and vigor and beauty, offspring worthy of their parentage.

Yet because this great oak is back of the house, it has been

less of my life than its fellows of the lane and roadside. A thousand evenings and more, in the thirty years I have lived with these great trees between me and the sunset, I have watched the red and golden west dim to pink and grey through their great branches. And later, when there was no more than a dulled brightness in the west, I have shifted my place in my chair and looked southwest. In this quarter, too, I have had great black boughs against the sky. So I am looking now, at evening, as on so many other evenings of my life. Even after evening, through long years I have sat here in my chair in the fading light, and had joy in the great limbs of oaks black against a sky like this, a sky of robin's-egg blue. And evening after evening, as this evening, the color of the sky has changed. Now it is robin's-egg blue; and now blue-green; and now just blue; and now grey with no more than a suggestion of liquid blue as it dims to the indistinguishable hues of night. But so long as I can see at all, there are boughs, great black boughs, against the sky.

1930

XI

For P. V. D. SHELLY

in gratitude for many drives through the Gorge . . .

BIRDS *and* BARRENS

OLD years brought back by killdeer calls; swallows that dared our northern March; the ripening of a friendship for pine-warblers—these are the ornithological experiences that stand out in memory as I look back upon our week at Brown's Mills-in-the-Pines, March 27-April 3, 1907. Brown's Mills lies just within the pine barrens that cover New Jersey southeastward of a line drawn from Sandy Hook to Salem. The Rancocas Creek, dammed here, spreads out into a little forked lake, from which two considerable branches extend eastward through low-treed sand wastes and cedar and cranberry swamps.

The absence of bird life in these barrens, though it was migration time, was more striking than the presence of any birds. Follow the narrow trails back into them in any direction, at any time of day, you would see little life even along the streams. Above you turkey buzzards were always circling, but what they found to feed on, where the few piners that lived hereabouts could barely scratch a living, is hard to tell. Save for the low sough of the wind in the pines that scarcely ever ceased, the buzz of the pine warblers' song, first from this tree, then from that, and the constant shrilling of the snowbirds from bush and ground, there was generally in these early spring days no more sound of life than sight of it in this monotonous region. Here and there *pusilla's* little song, clear and lonely, was piped from the scrub-oak, indicating how much more applicable here would be his New England name of bush sparrow than our field sparrow of the Middle States. Robins would be seen going over on any day's walk or drive, and sometimes a crow; several times flickers would loop across from some pine-stub, dead and charred, to a distant neighbor; we would pass a few families of chickadees, never more than four in number, and we would flush an occasional blue jay. Two kinglets—the

golden-crown—were come upon one day on our way home from White's Bog through pines rather higher than most in the neighborhood, and once two little brown creepers turned up with the chickadees that were always about the pond. These eleven varieties were all we saw in the barrens—unless you may count the black ducks of the pond—and all these but the kinglets and the creepers were found also in the cleared land westward, and with the exception of the pine warblers, were plentiful there.

Three miles westward from Brown's Mills you are in as fine land as may be found in all Burlington County, the banner farming district of New Jersey. Here birds were much plentier than in the barrens, and in drives and walks to Pemberton and Lewistown and Pointville we found bluebirds about every orchard, meadow larks in every great flat field, song sparrows by every roadside and stream side and fence row, grackles in every group of spruces and pines about the farmhouses, many of which were great structures of old red brick or old white clapboards. Redwings were less plenty, but they were tuning up, as yet hoarsely, from many bottoms. Robins were, curiously, not so abundant as in the cleared land about Brown's Mills; nor were the vesper sparrows. Perhaps the flocks of these latter two varieties were halting here, in this warm oasis of farmland in the pines, before going further north.

The robins and vesper sparrows were particularly in evidence on Sunday, March 31. Toward noon we walked up the Pemberton Road. There had been no sun all morning, and even now cold grey clouds walled all the skies; yet there was a glare over the white sandy fields, the steely dyked ponds and even the solid green pines, an unaccountable weird grey glare. It was a sky that foreboded snow, yet the day was not cold. A wild-flying bird drove eccentrically northward in curved zigzags. Its crying was strangely familiar, but for a moment I could not identify it. A ragged piner boy came to the rescue. Playing before a dilapidated shack by the roadside, which leaned westward like the blown trees of a seabeach, he saw my perplexity and cried, "That's a killdeer, Mister." That crying had brought back a country outing in

Chester County a quarter-century back. Now I knew why, for killdeers were always wheeling and crying about those upper reaches of Pickering Creek. In train of these memories came others of delightful wanderings in later years, and always in unfamiliar fields, since my Wissahickon Hills have not in my time been killdeer country. The bird's wild crying and wilder flight, the weird grey glare, the thoughts of long ago, combined to move me strangely, so that I am sure I shall not soon forget that scene—the straight road of yellow gravel, past the dyked pond of steely water and low houses of dull silver by the roadside, the white fields with their neat snake-fences, the dark horizon of pines. I noticed an apple tree by the door of the forlorn shack, to wonder even if its blooming in May would lend the place a suggestion of home. And yet a boy bred here harbored keen interest in birds and their ways, for he knew the white-bellied swallows, of which five were flying over the dyke opposite, and that they nested in boxes, and that other swallows nested in barns, and still others in chimneys.

All the way down this road to the pond we had passed little bunches of robins and scattered vesper sparrows. One bunch of the robins had dropped down into a tree to rest on its branches like cedar birds close together, but they belied any weariness by bursting into a chorus of song. The vesper sparrows, too, had sung a good deal. On our way back the country seemed alive with both species. Robins rose from the ground everywhere, and, lighting on fences and trees, sang as if in their twilight chorus. Had the cold, rainy morning prevented their song at dawn, and were they seizing this first kindly hour of the day to celebrate it, or were they rejoicing in their arrival at old haunts after a long journey? The vesper sparrows, too, seemed to have greatly increased in numbers in the fields we had found them in an hour before. We sat down on a bank to listen to the bird chorus. I had never anywhere heard so much bird song at any time of day. There was no moment when many robins were not singing; no moment that the sound of vesper sparrow song was not in our

ears in great volume; never, even after sundown in Berkshire sheep pastures, had I heard so many singing. The robins and vesper sparrows, though dominant, were not the only singers. Redwings gurgled from the little cedars along the fences, and grackles from the greater cedars; meadow larks chattered and fluted from ground and fence and air; field sparrows uttered their little plaints from low singing stations here and there; everywhere snowbirds twittered; and a solitary song sparrow bubbled up his notes from tubes that seemed ill-practised.

If bird-boxes argue a love of birds, the people of eastern Burlington County, both in the pines and without, must be written down great bird-lovers. Some cynics, not native, whom I consulted on the presence at every other house of a bird-box, held that it rather indicated plenty of time on the part of the householders. I have heard the same explanation of the "martin poles" in the little mountain villages of eastern Kentucky. Two native Brown's Millers whom I questioned were amused that anyone should wonder why people put up the boxes. "People always put up bird-boxes," was their comment, and they disclaimed my suggestion that the boxes were put up for martins. "Just for any kind of bird that came along," they said. I had had it in mind that as this was a country favored for chicken-raising the custom had arisen from the well-known utility of martins as clamorers over hawks and their pursuers. "They perhaps put up the boxes in old time, when there were more martins, to attract them and through them save their chickens from the hawks and crows," I thought, "and the practice has continued now when the martins are scarcer."

Certainly now bluebirds and white-bellied swallows and English sparrows occupy many of the boxes, although martins are still plentier hereabouts than in most places in the Delaware Valley. It is very usual to see two boxes to a house, a larger box with several openings great enough for martins, and the little box for one pair of wrens so common in all of our country that has the house wren. One house had three martin-boxes, of marvel-

ous architecture, and a most oppressive bottle-green. These boxes boasted loggias, porticos, steeples, all those extravagances that so delight the habitual whittler. Next door, a hundred yards down the road, and next to that again, the martin-box had just been remounted. In both places the unweathered pole was tin-banded for three feet up from a point about seven feet above the ground, presenting an unshinnable space above puss's jumping distance from the ground.

Pointville, however, can boast a more palatial martin-box than any at Brown's Mills. So large is the barrel from which it is made that I first thought it a dove-cote, for pigeons, too, are plenty about many of the little barns. This barrel presents a circular shingle roof narrowing up to a spire, and three tiers of holes. It could accommodate a large colony of martins, but now I am told it is no longer visited. I was disappointed at seeing no martins during my stay, for even in our colder hill country in Pennsylvania I had known them to come to their old homes before the end of March. As it happened, I saw no birds of any kind about any bird-boxes, save a bluebird sitting in the portico of a diminutive two-holed structure mounted upon a very climbable pronged cedar pole. This box was before a sawmill several hundred yards from any habitation. Any raccoon or possum or wildcat from the nearby wood could have clambered up to it with ease. As I watched, the bird's mate came to the box with straw. That was the only nest-building of any kind that I happened upon during our week.

It was indeed a most remarkable week. The Wednesday we arrived, March 27, was seasonable. Thursday it grew warmer, and on Friday with a thermometer reaching 87 we lay around out of doors as if it had been midsummer. Saturday was a tolerable day, somewhat cooler, and greying up in the afternoon. Sunday was gloomy and foreboding, and Monday morning we awoke to a driving snowstorm. Tuesday was warmer, with snow disappearing, and Wednesday as fine an April day of rare air and blue skies and heartening sun as one could wish. The great heat of Friday was followed by a great increase of birds on Saturday. They held over

on Sunday, and all but the swallows, which we first saw Sunday, through the snow of Monday.

The evening we arrived the only sign of bird life was a robin on the lawn. The next morning I heard but one robin song. In Germantown the morning before I had heard a dozen, and in Princeton, a few days earlier (March 22), more than a score. There were many robins about during the day, so it may be that most of the robins of the neighborhood resorted to some roost hereabouts where their dawn songs were sung far out of my hearing. I doubt, however, if this explains it, for the birds at home were still resorting—as they usually do until the middle of April—to a nearby roost nightly. Altogether the distribution of the robins at Brown's Mills puzzled me. That very many breed here empty nests in every roadside tree attest. It was surprising, too, that most of the robins of the neighborhood were still in flocks. Was it that the robins that breed at Brown's Mills were still to come from the South? And does this flocking indicate that our earliest robins are the birds that summer in the far north?

The morning after our arrival we heard in the early hours besides the solitary robin only the Carolina chickadees, which persistently sang against each other from the tall pines about the inn, and meadow-lark notes that pierced through to us from the open land northwest. The day was warm, but a walk through the pines by the pond, and an eye on the skies, and open ears as we loafed about the lawn, brought the list this first day only to thirteen. Flickers called rather frequently from the woods; bluebirds infrequently gurgled across, high up in the skies; a solitary grackle labored west at sunset. All day long chipping sparrows and pine warblers and snowbirds graduated their similar songs into one another so that at times you were troubled to identify the singers. The snowbirds were legion this day everywhere, on the inn lawns, on the sandy fields, in the peach and pear orchards and in the pine woods. I have never seen so many anywhere as I saw this day and the next. They sprang up before you like grasshoppers in a June meadow. A downy woodpecker was busy off

and on in the tall trees outside our window; twice I saw a pair of doves hurtle by, and once I heard a song-sparrow, which in the pines is not a common bird, but when you are well without them as plenty as may be. The turkey buzzards that you would see aloft almost any time you looked up completed a list of thirteen birds, not many for a day spent out of doors in the last days of March.

Nor was there an eventful episode in bird life to note. One bird a friend encountered here a year before was far more interesting than any I came upon. He had been carried out of doors on his cot and placed in the sun against a wind-break of low pines. As he dozed there he felt a plucking from below at the canvas of his bed. "A curious trick in a chicken," he thought, and reached his hand under to investigate. Yes, what he grabbed was feathers. Pulling the fowl out he was surprised as at an apparition by the red head and long, flopping wings of a turkey buzzard. The buzzard was, he learned, a regular habitué, and free to all the privileges of the place. What had become of the bird I could not learn.

Friday was the first day I saw crows, and every day after that I saw them, but it was only seldom in the pines. In the farmlands they were very plenty. There were phœbes by every stream I crossed this day, brought out by the warm weather, I suppose, from some retreats whither they had followed the gnats they prey upon. Now, too, we met blue jays, fluting, scolding, and ringing their mellow bell-notes, but they were not this day or any other plenty in the neighborhood. Most of the birds we saw this day were those we had seen the day before. We drove by narrow trails to Hanover Furnace, passing but few birds other than field sparrows, snowbirds, and pine warblers, in the pines but in the clearing about Hanover Furnace finding flocks of robins with many flickers feeding on the ground among them, and goldfinches hanging on old weeds. There were meadow larks, too, in these broad fields, uncultivated now and lapsing into barrens, and vesper sparrows and bluebirds in the old orchards. It is a lonely, forsaken place, Hanover Furnace, with a great house falling into decay and many cellar holes to tell that here was once a prosperous

forge. A wretched house at the crossroads, with one in sight across a quarter-mile field, was all we saw of the present-day Hanover. Yet a boy in the dooryard of the former shack was bright faced, and eager and explicit in giving us directions to White's Bog, a great cranberry dyke two miles and more south.

It was a dreary ride across waste lands with low pine and scrub oak, and half the way boggy. Here were only pine warblers and the inevitable buzzards. About the cranberry pond were many sparrows, of several kinds, but among them I could identify only the song-sparrows. Here, too, were buzzards and robins, but comparatively few birds all told. A pair of kinglets were the only birds other than buzzards and pine warblers we met on our four miles through the pines back to Brown's Mills. This afternoon white-bellied nuthatches were the new birds in the inn woods, where the Carolina chickadees sang so freely they attained to something of the melody of the crested tit.

Saturday morning we saw our first ducks on the pond, a pair of black ducks, and once afterwards we got up a pair from one of its backwaters. Birds were always scarce about the lake, not even a kingfisher making his appearance there while we were by until Tuesday, April 2. This one and a pair that were seen the next morning investigating a high dry bank by the roadside, far from water, possibly with nesting intentions, were all we saw on our trip. The other new bird of the day was a single fox sparrow, in full song. Sunday brought no new bird, save the white-bellied swallows and the killdeer, and a few cedar birds, who curiously lit in the same tree with a bunch of robins. Walking toward Lewistown on Monday I saw a Cooper's hawk. Tuesday at sunset I came upon a hermit thrush in the deep swamp by the Rancocas. Wednesday morning a drive to Pemberton added a sparrow hawk to the list. This completes the list—thirty-one in all, the smallest I ever recorded from a week of spring.

What I learned ornithologically from the trip was something of pine warblers. I had met them before, now and again, but their inconspicuousness and unappealing song had left little impression

upon me. Nor can I say now after a week, in which I think during the daytime I was hardly ever without their song in my ears, that I am greatly taken with them. They have now, however, an identity in my mind. They are cheerful, hardy little fellows, stoics in a snowstorm and epicureans in sunny weather. The pines were full of them all the time of our visit, but they were plentiful also along roadsides through farmlands. Had I left after a four days' stay I would have associated them only with the pine woods, whose lazy tonic quality their song re-echoes. At about every hundred yards in the high pines about the lower end of the pond you would come upon one singing. Standing at any point hereabouts and listening you could pick out five or six individual voices. Behind those would be a hum of others in the distance not unlike the sound of the wind in the pines. Those I observed did not pass from tree to tree like a kinglet, but after hunting through the top of one pine dipped to another a hundred yards distant, sang there, sometimes sitting still on a dead twig chippy-like and stuttering out chippy-like notes, and at other times singing as they hunted over the top branches.

During the day the pine warblers did not seem to be in flocks, but generally solitary, though often I saw a pair together. At nightfall I several times found four or five together in low bushes by the waterside. As I was walking by the pond on Monday evening after a day of snow I heard a very faint cheep. A standstill of a few minutes, and a peering around discovered four little birds on some sweet-pepper bushes that extended out over the water. It was a little while before I could identify them as pine warblers, because the one that was in male plumage kept persistently in a thick part of the bush. The three others were, in that light, without any yellow whatsoever. But even before I saw the male, white patches in the tail feathers and whitish wing-bars indicated the identity of the others. They could hardly have chosen a more uncomfortable hunting ground. There they were, just by the water, with no protection from the bitter wind that was blowing out of the sunset across the pond. Yet they hunted

about livelily, cheeping to each other constantly, though the wind every minute fluffed up their feathers, or, catching their tails, veered them around like miniature weathercocks.

The next morning I found a little flock of them feeding along a burnt-over fence-row between road and orchard. They were very tame, hopping within ten feet of me in their search for whatever it was attracted them in the charred stubble, and mounting the fence to sing at even nearer distance. They would be searching the interstices of the rails of the snake fence like wrens the minute after they had been ground hunting like chippies. A further versatility of procedure was revealed by a little flock in the pines below the inn the same evening. They drifted into a tree above me as noisily as yellowbirds. Love chases were interspersed with vireo-like hunting through the tops, creeper-like climbing on the larger branches and flycatcher excursions out into the air. All these activities were accompanied by ceaseless song, which once in a while had a more melodious quality than the lazy drawl so characteristic of the sun-steeped pine tops of midday. Whether the pine warbler is a bird you can take deep into your affections, I do not know. Only acquaintance with all his ways would reveal that, but what I learned of him in one week augurs well for a greater liking. For a warbler he is a restful bird, symbolical in this, as in song and dress, of the pine barrens that are his home.

1907

THE LOUISIANA WATER THRUSH

FROM high in the hemlocks above my head broke out the song, impetuous, rapid, loud. Strangely wild it sounded in these familiar woods, for all the Wissahickon here raced and tumbled like a mountain stream, for all the green gloom of the grove was as suggestive of remoteness as that of the great forests of the Alleghenies, for all no sound of man's making obtruded on the untainted air of early morning. Strangely fresh and full of the vigor of spring it was, though the morning was that of the twenty-eighth of July, and the wood thrushes I had been listening to as I walked up the valley could attain to no more than a semblance of their earlier song.

Tru tru tru, tru twicket, wicket wic rang out the song of the water thrush, the bird utterly oblivious of me as he sat on the hemlock limb not more than thirty feet above my head, bobbing in characteristic fashion between each repetition of the notes. Exuberant he was and full-voiced. Not content with his usual song, he indulged in variations and involutions that revealed to me why it was that Audubon wrote that the water thrush rivalled the nightingale. There is, indeed, something exotic in his song, as there is to me in several of the longer of our bird songs, that of the ruby-crowned kinglet and that of the purple finch.

It was the first time in nearly thirty years of wandering about the valley that I had heard the Louisiana water thrush sing here, and the late date at which I heard him made me dubious as to whether he had nested here. I wondered was he now in mating frenzy, or was it that return of spring song that migration sometimes stirs up. The water thrush dropped down to another hemlock, to one the branches of which extended out over the creek.

Seated there, not six feet above the roily water, he again burst into song. Then he swooped down to the very surface of the stream, and, snipe-like, flew sickle-wise upstream and across to the muddy bank of a slack water. Then I saw he was not alone. Another water thrush was already there, busy in hunting along the shallows. Uninterrupted hunting was too prosaic, however, for my first-discovered bird, and every minute or two he would wade out into the stream, and, mounting a stone, launch again into his loud melody. Strange, indeed, was it for me to see him here, a neighbor to the snipe and kingfisher, and to hear his song breaking in upon the hiccoughing of the Acadian flycatcher.

Even though I saw his mate I was not sure of his summering here, but another mile's progress upstream brought me to another water thrush feeding its young. So in this July of 1906 at least two pairs were resident on the Wissahickon. Again on August 6th, I heard a water thrush in full song along the creek, this time a mile lower down, just below the Monastery. What was really surprising was to hear the song again on August 26th, though now it was wanting in volume all three times I heard the bird utter it. Curious to find, if I could, whether there was a third family along my stretch of the creek, I went upstream again to the place, above Allen's Lane, where I had come upon the first singer. Hardly was I there by the rapids than one came flying down through the hemlocks, scolding lustily. He kept up his scolding as long as I stood there, so I presume that somewhere about he had young, late in the season though it was. I waited about a half hour, but he visited no young. Nor did he sing. I saw him no more that summer. In 1907 water thrushes returned to the stream, and since then I have heard them sing there, whenever I visited the creek at the "right time of the year."

It is not the valley of the Wissahickon, however, that is associated most closely with my experiences with the Louisiana water thrush, nor was it there I first got to know him. I first saw him on the lawn of my suburban home on his spring migration, and was driven to the books to identify him. For years I saw him there for

THE LIVEZEY PLACE, 1884

a few days each spring, along with the ovenbirds. I never heard the water thrushes sing then, though the ovenbirds did, both by day and by night.

The hearing of water thrush song was reserved for my first summer above the headwaters of Brodhead's Creek, in the Poconos, Here I found the Louisiana water thrush breeding, rather to my surprise, for I supposed the only water thrush of these upland streams would be the northern water thrush. The latter was here, too, but I got to know better the southern bird. It was here that I found his overarched nest in a tangle of tree roots above a backwater, and observed him daily as he raised a family of five. The quick growth of the young in a place of dampness and chill gloom strongly impressed upon me the vitality of the bird. Indeed, everything about the Louisiana water thrush emphasizes that vitality, his constant bouncing up and down as if he were on springs; his flight so quick and powerful that often takes him through the spray of tumbling water; the volume and far carriage of his song. He is the very incarnation of warm life.

1907

·THE PIPE BRIDGE·

THERE was an undoubted fascination about the Pipe Bridge for the small fry who lived along the Wissahickon. Its light ironwork bore aloft the two great mains that carried water from the reservoir at Shawmont, above Flat Rock Dam on Schuylkill, to Germantown. There was a sense of pleasure in thinking of the water pushing through those iron pipes so high above the earth. It wasn't much of a success, the scheme, for the pipes froze in winter and split, even when great clasps were bolted around them. In the end it had to be abandoned and underground pipes relied upon. It was torn down in 1891, having been for all its twenty years of existence a delight to the young folks if not a thing of utility.

The Pipe Bridge was a lure to youngsters all through the Seventies and Eighties. Venturing out on its narrow plank walk gave you a keener sense of being aloft than anything save a balloon in those pre-flying days. That walk was of two planks, each a foot wide, resting side by side on the light network of iron that tied the two mains together. The planks were laid snug to the south main. We used to go out further and further on these planks as we grew bigger until at last we mastered courage to cross to the Roxborough side. Year by year the planks grew more weather-worn and weaker, but I cannot recall that one ever broke and let anybody through. They were replaced when they became thoroughly rotten, but they were never, in my time, all really trustworthy at any one time. It would have been a fatal fall, for the planks were one hundred and three feet above the creek. The bridge was six hundred and ninety-one feet long, and it was supported by three iron

piers eighty-three feet high set on masonry bases twenty feet high. Those bases are all that remains of the bridge today.

It was fun to lie on these planks, midway of the bridge, of a bright day in fall, and to watch the couples pass under, and to drop acorns to startle them. Here, too, you had before you a pageant of such color as Pennsylvania's autumn brings to our hills, a pageant in which the sharp red of red maples and the bright yellow of tulip poplars were the most vivid hues. With the black the hemlocks assumed in full sunlight, the maple red and poplar yellow made that tricolored effect that has been exciting to man in everything from a leopard skin to a teapot of painted tin. My own greatest moment on the Pipe Bridge was when on one such day of fall a hawk beat slowly upstream and passed under just where I lay. He was the familiar redtail, but I had never before seen him from above, or so close alive. The brightness of the reds and browns of his feathers, and his buoyancy, thrilled me as had little that up to that time had come my way.

1929

XII

For ELLIOTT K. HERMAN

follower of the old ways . . .

OF MICE *and* MOUSING

THE small boy lay quiet in the half-light of the haymow Sometimes he had gone there to hide in playing with other children; or to stow treasures in its many dark corners; sometimes it was only to watch the pigeons in their box; or to hear the rain on the roof. It was raining now. How he loved to lie there, all snug and warm in the sweet-smelling hay, listening to the pelting on the slates! The rain and the pigeons blended voices in a soft murmur that was made only sleepier by the horses' stamping in their stalls below. But the boy had not come there to sleep. It was hard to keep awake, but keep awake he did, and very still. At last he was rewarded by hearing little pushings and scrapings in the hay; the mice were creeping about. He steadied his muscles when he heard them, in so doing making a little noise that stopped their creepings. He had so to steady himself for the pounce he should make when the mouse would push out of the hay on to the oat-bin's edge. Quick as a cat he pounced, catching and crushing the mouse in his hands with one grab. Thus it was he satisfied his hunting instinct and got tasty provender for his eight screech owls.

He caught many mice in this way and he was never bitten. Others he prosaically clubbed to death when he found them in the oat-bin, with the worn old broom with broken handle that reposed there. This was not half so much sport, but he continued it longer for as he grew older time became too precious for so slow hunting. The owls, too, had now been let go. He would still go to the loft sometimes, however, on rainy days, or when there were kittens there, on such days often climbing up into the steepled ventilator, where mud wasps droned, and where was an opening he had made to the roof by hammering out slats, an opening wide enough for him to push his thick little body through.

On rainy days he would sit inside the ventilator, looking out towards Thomas's Woods. There, and in the adjoining fields, the banks of Paper Mill Run were inhabited by many muskrats. In these days he was saving up money for a steel trap, for he intended having some of those muskrats, enough for several pets, a pair of gloves and a cap. The instinct of the chase, that had begun with stoning cats and crushing mice, was developing in him along with many other small animalisms. Had a real love of animals not outgrown that instinct, it might have led in the end, after muskrats and rabbits failed to satisfy his lust for blood, to a desire to kill big game. I take it there is very little difference in spirit between that small boy with hands bloody from mice-crushing and the larger boy skinning and dressing his first bear.

The small boy got the steel trap in due time, patiently waited all fall for the weather to rust it in the out-of-door hiding place he had discovered for it, and then, when winter began, set it on some favorite landing place of the muskrats or in under-water entrances to their burrows. He was more successful in catching them in the former situations. Sometimes his victim was drowned when he went to the trap at daybreak. He had to go very early for the game, as he had to set the trap for it late the evening before. The stream where he trapped was on lands whose owner kept most vigilant and swift-running undergardeners. Sometimes the rat had sprung the trap but escaped; sometimes it had gnawed off the caught leg to free itself; sometimes it was alive and full of fight. What troubles he had carrying these rats home alive! Unlucky beasts, they could not understand they were wanted as pets, and they would struggle around, and, catching at the chain, try to climb up it to bite their tormentor. The leg bruised by the vice-grip of the trap was always so injured that not one of these rats he took home alive lived more than two weeks after its capture. They must have endured torments with those swelled, mortifying legs, though the small boy did his best for them, many times narrowly escaping their teeth as he tried to anoint the injured leg as its owner sat crouched in the bottom of its barrel. He

varied their food with everything he could think of, apples, celery, lettuce, cauliflower leaves, vainly wading icy streams for crawfish and depriving his dog of choice morsels the cook was wont to save for him. But to no purpose, and after the third muskrat was sacrificed he realized they could not live so maimed in captivity and out of water, and he killed the rest he caught alive.

He remembers one caught in the Water Works Dam, a quarter of a mile below Thomas's, every time his skin-cap is found in clearing out the camphor chest. That rat contributed the top of the cap. When his captor first saw him, he was sitting up on a stone in the water washing his face and tidying his very comely dark fur as best he could with a hind foot crushed between the tight jaws of a steel trap. How that rat did squeal and show his yellow teeth, but there was no pity in the small boy's heart, for in his mind's eye he saw that fur in the top of his cap, and the rat was quickly despatched. The small boy had trouble in school and at home from the smell of his hands this muskrat-trapping winter. He was no skilled skinner, and musk, a choking odor and slow to wear off, was unafraid of any of the solvents he or his mother knew.

It was in these same years that the boy came across field-mice and white-bellied mice. The former he did not really get to know until he later moved further into the country, but he had many opportunities one winter of watching the white-bellied mice. They established themselves this winter in the greenhouse, much to the gardener's disgust. Their eating off of the whole striking-box full of carnation slips was but one of many sins. But the small boy, sympathetic as he always was with the gardener, thought the mice too much fun to be killed. He tried to catch them alive but failed, and he would not try to catch them in killing traps. So the mice waxed even fatter and bolder until the gardener declared that if they were there another winter there would be no plants. Fortunately they moved out in the summer and did not come back the following fall. When the boy looked into the books for these mice he found them written down as deer-mice. He supposed the

name was given them because of their great soft eyes, their large ears, which they turned forward interrogatively as they peered out at him from between flowerpots, and their beautiful fawn color that brightened to almost golden on their sides and darkened on the middle of their backs to nearly black. From the bright fawn of their sides their white flanks and belly and feet were cut off clearly, leaving the golden and ermine in sharp but beautiful contrast. Pop eyes are not usually beautiful, but deer-mice's pop eyes are, lustrous black and as lovely as those of a flying squirrel when he turns his gaze on you suddenly as he clings to a tree and those luminous beads quiver and glow through the dusk.

In these twenty years since, the small boy that was and deer-mice have had many meetings, one or two memorable to him. I was poking one sunny morning in late winter down the long abandoned mill-race in the Cresheim Valley, hoping to flush some interesting birds, when I saw an old catbird's nest about five feet above the ground in a spice-bush. I noticed it was roofed over, and suspecting mice, I shook the nest a little, putting one hand over the hole I took to be the exit. There were no developments. "Too wintry yet for him to be in such a place," I thought, but I stuck my finger in the hole to make sure. It met something soft and as I withdrew it there followed it out drowsily a deer-mouse. I held my hand just below the edge of the nest and the mouse deliberately walked into it. I had afterwards a similar experience with a ground-hackie but he had been hibernating. After I had held him in my hand for a little, blood flowed from his mouth, and he gasped and died. This deer-mouse, however, sat quietly in my hand until its warmth revived him to restlessness. Then I put him on the nest, from which he crawled down the bush to the ground and disappeared in the matted brush of the old mill-race. He had been hibernating for a short time, I suppose, in the old nest, his last fall's home, where perhaps the recent cold spell had caught him, and now the sun had toasted some of the sleep out of him. My touch was all that was needed to wake him.

Judging by the relative numbers of wild mice the cats bring in

in the winter you would say the deer-mice are scarcer in winter than the field-mice, and therefore that the deer-mice hibernate more regularly. In severe weather and despite deep snow the cats find field-mice but never shrew-moles. Yet in the severest weather of the hard winters of 1903–04 and 1904–05 I never walked in the woods after a fresh fall of snow without coming upon both deer-mouse and shrew-mole tracks. The latter were fairly frequent, although only about one in ten as compared to the squirrel tracks. The deer-mice tracks were less plenty, but here and there they were, leading from some tree root across my path to a brush patch, where they had evidently been eating buds and hips, and back again to the starting place.

In the other seasons the deer-mice are much more in evidence. You can find little piles of kernelled cherry stones, like sand poured from an hourglass, resting against old cherry-tree roots below the holes in the decaying trunks in which the mice live. From spring to fall the cats catch many of them but they are so prolific I note no diminution in their numbers in our neighborhood. I hate, however, to see them caught, nest robbers though they may be. They are so much more lovable than any other mice, so squirrel-like in many ways that even beskirted humans lose their long fostered dread of mice when these are the mice in question. The other evening when I came home the lady of the house was in a little flutter of pleasurable excitement over one that the cat brought in. She had rescued it from Letitia and it had hidden for a while only suddenly to appear perched on the handle of a large leather bag like a squirrel eating a nut. After calmly surveying the room it climbed down and disappeared and although we never saw it again she had no tremors because of its possible presence in the room.

One day when I was forking some half-rotted litter from a pile into the wheelbarrow, I unearthed a deer-mouse's nest. The mother ran out in alarm, several young hanging on to her as she made away in short jumps to a nearby stone heap. I picked up five between the nest and the mother's place of refuge, little maltese fel-

lows with pink noses, and with heads and ears absurdly large in proportion to their bodies. I examined them for a few minutes and then gathering together the larger pieces of their grass nest put them in it and it in the stone heap. Thither the mother had already carried the smaller pieces of the nest, not seeming to take much notice of me who sat with her young in my hand on a log not ten feet away. She now hunted around busily in the litter for her young, and when I put them down in it carried them off one by one in her mouth to the rearranged nest in the stone heap. When she had the five there she was still unsettled. She moved around in the litter, ran all around the pile, making little excursions off into the grass and brush beyond. Then she began to dig busily in the litter. By this time I was sure she missed some of her young, so I went to her assistance and scattered the pile about, but no more young could I find. While I was thus occupied she, from her retreat in the stone heap, watched me with bright eyes and ears turned forward eagerly. At last I thought to look in the wheelbarrow, and there I found in a piece of nest, a young mouse almost suffocated. I put it down where she could see it and she came out, picked it up in her mouth, and carried it off to the nest. The six evidently made her all for she did not come back to the little pile now, but stayed in the stone heap. I have never satisfied myself whether she could count up to six or whether she knew one was gone by feeling she had one less nursing or whether her keenness of smell told her one particular young was about somewhere outside of the stone heap.

The boy had begun studying mice more or less systematically when at seventeen he moved to a place in the country, where there was every possible kind of cover, dry grassy upland, old brush-grown fence-rows, woodland along a stream, and marsh. At this time he was given a number of traps by a naturalist who is now a great authority on mice, even to having some varieties named after him, and the boy was proud to think that he was adding ever so little to science as well as protecting the celery in the garden whose almost every heart was partially eaten by mice this

first winter. At first he blamed the devastation on the field-mice, but his traps soon told him the pine-mice were the more frequent offenders. These silky-furred little fellows ran their underground shafts up into the celery mounds and lived snug and dry in the oak leaves under the broad boards that protected the rows.

Pine-mice are beautiful little fellows, red-brown above and a greyish lead color below, looking in their mole-like fur very much like the shrew-mole, with little ears that do not rise above the fur and with short tails, but with rounded snouts and beady eyes. They are smaller than the field- or meadow-mice, being only about four inches long, tail and all, and since they spend so much of their time underground they are little known even by farmers and truckers whose seeds and tubers they so often destroy. In a potato field that lies along a wood's edge near my home I have seen hill after hill ploughed up with hardly an untasted potato in it. Sometimes they leave nothing of the tuber but the skin. This potato field is of just such a soil and situation as pine-mice most flourish in, light upland loam and along a wood's edge. You can drive down a spade in hardly a square yard here without coming across their tunnels. Catching them and the shrew-mole in mole-traps has brought home to me as only experience can a sense of the mammalian life that swarms underground. Here through tunnels pass moles, shrew-moles, pine-mice, and I suspect, though I have never trapped them, shrews as well. When the tunnels come to the surface along fence-rows and wood's edges the deer-mice use them too. I have seen them take refuge here when fleeing from their homes under rotten logs I have kicked over. The field-mice generally run their trackways along the top of the ground, eating off the grass roots to make their passage easy, but them too, I have found in traps set in the tunnels.

When the boy began trapping for his scientific friend he knew only house-mice, field-mice, deer-mice, shrews and moles. Very shortly he added to his list the star-nosed mole, which frequented the wet ground along the creek; the pine-mice, which were plentiest in the uplands; and the shrew-moles which he found everywhere

he set a trap. Of these latter species he came to know best the shrew-moles. The cats would not eat them but would leave them maimed, as they would leave the snakes they caught, by the house-door. I have never seen any animal so savage as these little silver-grey fellows. I know nothing of the larger carnivora but I cannot imagine how any flesh-eaters could be fiercer than these. Those brought in maimed by the cats were full of fight to the last and even after the hard mauling they suffered they often had enough life in them for a vicious snap with their fanged jaws.

It was not until a few years ago, however, that I came upon them at their fiercest. I was on my way to the train one morning when alongside of the footpath I follow through a hillside wood I saw too mites of silvery grey fur gripped in mortal combat. Each ahold of the other by the throat they were flopping about like wrestlers, first one and then the other being thrown. I stood over them but they paid no attention to me; there was nothing in the world for those two but their fight. It did not matter which was on top, one at every flop seemed to be sinking his pig-like snout deeper in the throat of the other. I know a bulldog that kills even great danes that way, fastening his jaws in their breasts and disregarding their every plunge and bite. He simply holds on, sinking his teeth in deeper at each struggle of his victim, until he has reached the great veins near the heart and the big beast dies of loss of blood.

That I saw would be in a few minutes the fate of one of the shrew-moles, so I determined to separate them. I poked them with my foot, but that had no effect; I seized hold of each by the hind part of the body to pull them apart but had I pulled hard I would have pulled out the throat of each, for neither would let go. I dropped them on to the ground, shouted, stamped alongside of them. These tactics were more effective. The more badly wounded one let go his hold of the other. I pressed both hard into the ground with my foot, rumpled them together, and they were at last apart. Exhausted utterly, they lay panting on the green moss. After a while, a minute or two perhaps, the stronger started up with a

squeak and ran nimbly to some leaves a foot away. Here after he disappeared I found the entrance to his tunnel by scraping the leaves away. I took the badly injured one down the hill a few yards and let him go. I wondered what the chances were they would meet underground and settle matters without interference. Perhaps I did not save the weaker after all.

This fight recalled heroic combats I had witnessed twenty years before between moles in an olive keg. The knowledge that two would fight if confined together at such close quarters came to me quite accidentally through the catching of two moles the same day, and the putting of them in the keg to show them to the curious. Once obtained, however, the knowledge was never forgotten and on rare occasions when we caught two alive on the same day I condescended to share the bliss of beholding a new kind of fight with a few privileged ones of the neighborhood. I was then almost as popular as in pear time. Indeed there has been always in my mind an association between Sheldon pears and moles because it was from the celery seed-bed in the shade of the Sheldon pear trees that the gardener dug most of the moles I have seen. He usually caught them during the noon hour, when he rested from hard labor and smoked his corncob pipe. To this seed-bed he sometimes came also on the half hours and hours, for he believed the moles worked then and not between those times. When he caught one at such times he would come with it to me, crushing by the exhibit my unbelief in their knowledge of the clock. He believed they took a peculiar satisfaction in harassing the celery seed-bed, his most cherished part of the garden, and I think they did, but hardly because of the malevolence he saw in their tunneling. Earthworms were always plenty in the seed-bed because of its frequent watering and its rich soil, and where many earthworms are there moles will be.

The gardener used to cut elderberry twigs, peel them and stick them in the heaved-up workings, holding that the moles disliked their odor. It is no effort to conjure him up in his hunting attitude. Sunk in on himself, with left elbow resting on crouched

left knee and left hand comfortably fingering his pipe he kept his eyes fixed on the furthest point of the tunneling in his loved bed. Calm without, he was angry and sore within, for that seed-bed was as the apple of his eye. Saw he the earth heave he gave a curious hop, jammed his left heel behind the moving earth, dug his right hand into it, and tossed out the mole. One so caught the small boy skinned and converted into a pocketbook, his aunt assisting by sewing it to the steel clasps. It was hardly a success from her point of view, his curing being crude, but it was enviously sniffed and stroked by other small boys to whom he accorded the privilege of examining it. No one else had a moleskin purse and he was well satisfied with it, empty though it generally was and moth-eaten in appearance as it soon became.

From the start the boy had known more of mousers than of mice. Among the earliest things he remembered were cats' bringings of mice to their kittens to play with and to kill. That was even before he used to ask to be allowed to sit up to hear the singing mouse that lived under the great bookcase in his father's library. This mouse did not come out until after nine o'clock and it was a long time after he had heard of it that he saw it. He was asleep in a big arm chair when his father's voice woke him saying, "Do you hear it singing?" He moved in waking and the mouse darted under the bookcase. His father told him to sit perfectly still and the mouse would come out again. It did, and running fearlessly out into the middle of the floor, sat up on its haunches and made a thin cheetering noise, its lips trembling, and its whiskers moving rapidly. They used to talk of trapping that mouse, but they never did. The boy took pains to keep the cats away from its neighborhood, but they caught plenty of others, wild mice and house-mice, and helped him to know some of the varieties by bringing them into the house, before he had learned how to go mousing himself. The screech owls came about the house and he was told they were mousing, but it was not for some years that he saw them at it. But of the many animals that mouse he soon saw others at the work. He saw crows stab suddenly as they stood in ungainly

fashion in the long grass along the hedgerows of the nearby meadow, and he took a deep interest in making a small snake disgorge a mouse it had swallowed.

Two brothers in the neighborhood who were woodwise told him of other mousers, barn owls, great horned owls, skunks, foxes, opossums, raccoons, weasels, minks and wildcats. Of these there were no wildcats, or foxes, or great horned owls in his neighborhood and he never saw any of them elsewhere mousing, but as time went on he came upon the others mousing or upon evidences of their mousing. The opossums rifled the deer-mice nests in hollow logs in the long woodpile behind the stable; he met skunk and weasel mouse-in-mouth in country lanes; he came across barn owls and many kinds of hawks mousing on the great marshes along the Delaware below Marcus Hook. The hawks are the mousers seen most often at work, especially the rough-legged hawks that you may see flying over marshes on any river walk in winter. These birds, like the red-tailed and red-shouldered hawks common upon the uplands, catch the field-mice even on snow-covered meadows in the short excursions they make from the mouths of their snow tunnels.

You may take many walks afield before it comes home to you how very important to bird and beast is the mouse crop. If you wish to realize their general use as food by hawks, owls, and small mammals, read the reports of stomach examinations made by the experts of the museums and of the government. Seeing the mousers at work is, of course, more interesting than reading statistics. If you live in the country you soon learn what mousers the cats are and if you walk the countryside once in a while at night you will stumble upon the screech owls at work. I have many times almost bumped into them as they rose from some low bush or from some fence-rail where they were watching. It will always be to me, however, thrilling in its little way, the startled beating of wings usually noiseless, the low cries and sometimes those eyes of unplumbed yellow light flashed on you out of the darkness. Sometimes the screech owls mouse from higher stations, their

noiseless swoops known to you only by the faint squeak of transfixed mouse or the brush of the captor's wings as they strike grass or bush. That they can eat many mice I, who as a boy used often to have several owls imprisoned, can testify. As interesting to me as listening to their hunting, was the examination of the pellets of mouse hair and bones they disgorged after swallowing their prey. A screech owl that had possessed itself of an abandoned flicker's hole in a decaying oak tree on our place always disgorged the indigestible parts while sitting on the lower branches of a young elm tree nearby. It had used this spot some time before I discovered its practice. When I came upon the place a line of mouse skulls and hair, bleached light grey by processes of partial digestion and the weather, extended around the tree. The owl always sat itself down for the disgorging at points equally distant from the trunk so that the rejecta described a circle whose center was the trunk.

I have mentioned by no means all the creatures that mouse. Dogs will take to mousing. I knew one belonging to our old gardener that would sit by a mouse hole in the stable as patiently as a cat, and if he missed his mouse oftener his zest in the chase was no less. This dog, a nondescript terrier, was never ashamed of mousing as so many dogs are when caught at it. Your puppy will dig openly and unashamed after pine-mice and moles in the fields, but mousing is put away by the average self-respecting dog, with rug teasing and shoestring chewing, and other childish things. He will still do such things on the sly, but catch him at it and he will fall to heel dejected or have sudden important business at the other side of the field to take him away from your amused eyes.

One of the best mousers I ever knew was an old Light Brahma rooster of ours. He has been dead these twenty years and the bleak high-boarded cowyard where he marshalled his dames is no more, but I can see it as clearly as if twenty years ago was yesterday. He is standing under the long cleated board that is the stairway from the chicken house to the cowyard, for it is raining. A small boy, the rain beating on his face, is hanging over the high-boarded fence, so lost in admiration of the ponderous rooster and

sleek hens, that he forgets he is rubbing the red wash of the fence indelibly into his clothes. He is especially proud of that cock because he set the clutch of eggs from which the big bird came, and he regards him as his own property. To avoid the drip from the cleated board the rooster has his head turned in, almost touching the boards that form the walls of the brooding chambers under the chicken house. The boy notices the sleepy eye of the cock grow alert, then swift as heron striking minnow the old bird has snapped a mouse. Unsuspecting an enemy in the rooster the mouse was venturing out to pick up a grain of corn the fat chickens were too lazy to eat. That was the first time the small boy saw his rooster catch a mouse, but not the last. It gave an added zest to visits to that most interesting spot in the place, the cowyard, to know that possibly he would see the big fellow mouse. Perhaps the Brahma had caught mice before this day the boy first saw him at it, certainly he had often stood where he caught that mouse, and in that same spot he secured the rarer titbit of a young rat that was already more than mouse size. After this whenever the small boy caught mice and had not owls to feed he threw the mice to the chickens, who after a few preliminary alarm cackles when the dead mouse fell among them fought for it as eagerly as if it were soupmeat.

The small boy never attempted to make pets of any of the mice, much as he loved the darting, bewhiskered, bright-eyed little fellows. His one attempt with those magnified field-mice the muskrats, was a failure. True, he kept a little red bat in a box in the garret until his mother discovered it. She had the feminine prejudice common against mice and flitter-mice and he had to put the bat out. It was only by pleading he saved its life, and then it bit him as he was releasing it. Later a muskrat came to live on his place. Inasmuch, however, as it dammed up a French drain to have a pool to live in, and inasmuch as that pool was not more than a hundred feet from the young chickens and the vegetable garden, he had to forego his desire to tame it, and to trap it instead.

He thought then and he thinks still that deer-mice could be

tamed as readily as English dormice or our own grey squirrels or flying squirrels. He never saw a tame deer-mouse, but in the thatch roof of the spring house of his later home he used to watch them peering out at him so familiarly that he came to believe that a little coaxing would bring them to eat out of his hand. But then he was no longer a possessor of the leisure that had taught him in boyhood what he knows of wild life, and the mice remained untamed.

It is not likely that I shall forget these few kinds of mice I know, although I no longer trap them. As long as I have cats of the redoubtable mousing family that have lived with us for five of their generations mice will be always brought to my attention. It is no unusual event for me to be interrupted in reading by Letitia Penn, our Maltese coax, patting on the window panes, with fat field-mouse in mouth for her kitten or to be awakened at midnight by Hannah Matlack, her sister, scrambling in the vines outside my bedroom window, with deer-mouse in mouth for her kitten, or for Letitia's if she, altruist that she is, is helping Letitia to mother hers.

They bring home, too, shrews and shrew-moles, and ground-hackies, and rabbits, and sometimes even red squirrels. They are certainly mousers par excellence, and beautiful creatures, with deep inscrutable eyes, and lithe active bodies, of infinite patience in watching and quicker in the pounce than eye may follow. Only once have I seen a more beautiful mouser than Letitia. It was at daybreak of a day of bitter black frost. The deep saffron east gave the only color to a black world, for the fields were snowless. We were trudging westward up a low hill through high grass that would have been red had the sun been higher. The wind was coming so strong out of the west that the hound hung at heel, careless of all the rabbits in the world. The eastern sky was growing deeper saffron and the fields taking on a touch of red-brown when we passed the top of the rise. Four great white birds rose just at our feet and were brushed by us and carried down the wind by the gale from the west. We turned to shoot but fortunately the wind was too quick for us and just as we saw the four great snowy

owls against the saffron east they dropped down the other side of the rise we had crossed. We ran quickly after them to the hilltop but the wind had already carried them to cover. We hunted over those red-brown fields for a half hour but in vain. The owls were gone, and it was well. A stuffed owl under a glass case in the living room would be a poor symbol compared to this that memory holds of the most picturesque of my little experiences with mice and mousers—four birds floating against a saffron sky.

1906

·THE SCREECH OWL·

IT IS difficult for us to rid ourselves of the feeling that the screech owl, like his larger fellows, is a bird of ill omen. We are familiar enough with him in the dooryard, though the hours he chooses to visit us are usually the hours of twilight or of darkness. We know his whooing of February evenings, the mews and sputters he makes later in the spring when he brings his young with him on his nightly rounds, the sibilant hissing with which he sometimes expresses his disapproval when we come too close for what he considers his safety.

We have climbed up to his retreat in the hollow limb of some old apple tree, and observed him there sitting in dignity on the top of a pyramid of mouse skulls. We have visited daily the place under the stump of a great black oak where he came to regurgitate the pellets of mouse hair and bones after his nocturnal orgies. We have seen him resting cosily with his two young and his mate on a low bough of sassafras, all four of them cheek by jowl and outlined against the full moon just risen above the wood's edge. We have pitied him in the daytime, pestered by small birds as he tried to hide close by the trunk of some sparse cedar. We have even been guilty of having him shot, and stuffed by the barber, and of living with him as he sat, a fluff of red and soft yellowish feathers, on a sawed-off limb silvered with tinsel and artificial snow.

With it all, however, the screech owl remains a bird aloof, apart, as fiercely independent as a cat, with untamedness and wildness personified in the fire of his fierce glance, and with open beak and raised feathers defying you to do your worst. Once I had eight of his kind to feed daily. I bought butcher's meat for them,

and I became an adept pursuer of mice to give them fresh meat with a little gamey taste to it, with that spice of rodency they were used to. The owls were the most exacting members of my backyard menagerie. In the end I released them all, trying hard to take each one back to the neighborhood in which I had found him holed. Yet with all this familiarity with the screech owl I never came to feel toward him as I did toward even such untamable birds as nighthawk and sparrow hawk. There is in us by tradition an association with the owl that makes us uneasy at his presence and his voice, a something sinister, precursive of evil, unfriendly to man.

The attitude of the average man toward the screech owl was borne in upon me at an early age. My school chum and I had asked an old farmer if we might look for owls in his apple orchard. It was in February, when we could do little damage to anything about the place, and the orchard itself was in such neglect that we could hardly make any of the trees worse than they were by climbing them. A few minutes after we began working over the trees the farmer came out with two of his small grandchildren to see what luck we were having. We had just secured a screech owl, sitting solitary in a hollow of the tree, when the old man came up to us. The poor owl was naturally resentful of his abrupt forth-plucking from his home. He looked fierce enough, but he could do my gloved hand no damage as I held him by the feet and kept a stick in his open beak. "Ain't it a pesky thing," said the farmer, the first and last time I ever heard that word on the lips of man.

There were many screech owls about when we came to live on Township Line in 1900. There had been owls about at Tulpehocken Street, and more of them on Upsal Street, but here close to the wooded slopes above the Wissahickon there were more of them about than in any place I had lived or visited. Unfortunately a boy of the neighborhood developed his killing instinct, and began picking owls off one by one until they were nearly cleaned out. He has now grown up and moved away but the owls have not re-established themselves in our neighborhood. It is a little event

now when one comes round. We more often hear the owls now than see them, though no February passes without my going out and locating our gently whooing visitor in some tree about the house.

The screech owls still hold on to old haunts even close to the heart of Germantown. It is only a few years ago I picked up one dead on Greene Street below Tulpehocken. It had probably been blinded by some automobile light, and killed by one of the continually passing stream of cars. It was a bird in the red plumage, as have been almost all I have ever come upon on all sides of Germantown. It may well be that the starlings are partly responsible for the diminution of the owls, as they are for that of all birds who nest in holes in trees and about buildings. The starlings unquestionably mob the screech owls whenever they have the chance, and they now occupy several tree holes in our neighborhood that once housed the better bird. There is still good mousing about for the little owls, and one rarely now hears the sound of a gun on the hills. One cannot but be hopeful that, despite the starlings, the screech owls will re-establish themselves hereabouts as have the doves.

1929

·SEVEN SCENTS·

THE spring sounds come before the spring scents, but the spring light is the first sign of the re-awakening of the year. The golden green has crept into the sunset skies a score of times before you see against it the lines of northing blackbirds, and hear their glad clacking. There is a new note in the wind once it turns March. Before you hear that note, though, the cardinals have begun to seek the tops of the high trees and to whistle out their faith that the days will soon grow warmer. The winter notes of the song-sparrow are now passing into spring notes, and you may hear any morning the doves cooing in the crab-apple tree in the dooryard.

If you are lucky you may come on the first scent of spring even in February. Seek out some pocket of the woods where a spring rises, a pocket out of the wind and fronting the morning sun, and the early earth-scent may manifest itself by noon of a Washington's Birthday. That first scent of all is of wood-mould warmed by the sun, and of some faint emanation, perhaps, from the trees and bushes as they feel the stir of sap rising up in their trunks and stems from their roots. Such a wood-smell is only, however, the augury of what is to come. The full wood-smell is seldom loosed before the end of March. Then, some morning of intermittent rain, that is now torrential, and now hardly more than a mist, some morning of rain and of wind from the south, you rouse with the full savor of the awakening woods in your nostrils.

The second scent is a scent of March, a faint scent that you have to sniff in deeply in hollows by creeksides if you would know its full savor. It is the scent of spicewood in bloom, of those inconspicuous flowers of golden yellow that are almost the firstlings

of the year. It may be there are other elements than the spicewood in the scent that hovers about spicewood hollows, an element, perhaps, of the tufted blooms of red maple that have only the slightest scent in themselves but that may add something to the scents that float about in little creek valleys by blending with spicewood and the exhalations from other budding shrubs and from grass. It is a scent easy to miss, this scent of spicewood and its fellows, unless you happen to be in the midst of a thicket of spicewood, or down wind from it. It is a refreshing scent, as refreshing to the nose as cold water to the skin.

It brings with its drinking-in its store of memories. It brings back to you woodcock that rise, big-eyed, from beside you, and shuttle away noisily from the spring-hole in which you disturbed them. It brings back those fires you had once of spicewood cut when part of a thicket had to be cleared away to place a hen-house. They were old bushes with stems two and three inches in diameter. Those little logs burned away to the whitest ashes you ever saw, ashes whiter than any snow you ever saw, ashes as white as that ground chalk you call whiting. There was scent of spicewood in the room only when the burning logs fell and scattered out little puffs of ashes on the hearth, or when the wind without started a back-draught down the chimney and drove the current of warm air from the fire out into the room. Then you were laved in spicewood scent but in spicewood scent without the delicious coolness laving you now in the swale between the brown leaf-carpeted hills.

There was woodsiness in the earth-scent of February. There was woodsiness in the spicewood scent of March. There is no woodsiness, no tang of the wild, about the scent of April orchards, but hominess only. The clean scent of cherry-bloom, the spiciness of pear-bloom and the utter sweetness of apple-bloom are all associated from of old with the homeyard, the loved buildings about the barn, the stepping stones down to the spring-house; and the very whites and pinks and reds of the fruit-tree flowers are inextricably associated with the whites and pinks and reds of human faces. The fruits, too, of cherry tree and pear tree and

apple tree have given us words to describe man's features. The cherry lip is old in English poetry. Pears have given their russets to descriptions of faces grown ruddy with days out of doors. And apples have lent their reds to the painters of portraits in words who would picture for us cheeks mantling with the quick blood of youth.

Fruits are of those few things in life that are as good in their realization as in their promise. Cherries are as beautiful in their way as cherry-bloom in its way. So it is, too, with the pears and apples. They are as good as the blossoms that foretell them. Yet much as all these fruits are to me, to scent and sight and taste, I have more joy in the bloom's appeal to two senses only. All day long, towards April's end, I have joy in the sight of bloom on cherry and pear and apple, but I have joy in their scents day and night both, joy in them all my waking hours. And how often, in old years, walking on these hills in the night, their more peopled past was brought back to me by drifts of cherry-scent, or of pear, or of apple reaching me suddenly down the air in places where there are no houses now. The fruit trees seem to disperse the odors of their bloom in little clouds of fragrance, carried waywardly this way or that by wandering puffs of wind.

Where I live now, and have lived these thirty years, there have been many nights when one of these fragrances or another has made its way in at open windows and possessed all the house. Mazzard cherries are everywhere about our acre; a Catherine pear tree of four-score years' growth embowers the wing of the house; and there are four large apple trees in the backyard. The three generations of men that have occupied the house have all realized that fruit trees are the trees for the homeyard.

There have been locust trees on or near all the four places I have known well about Germantown. Locusts are a native tree. And yet, somehow, they do not seem typical of our neighborhood. That is, I suppose, not only because they are not a common tree hereabouts, but because I know so much larger specimens of locusts up-state, in Lancaster County and in Juniata Country

for two places. There are little villages north of Lancaster overcanopied by locusts, and long lanes of locusts reach back from the road to the farmhouses in the Tuscarora Valley. It is this association of the locust with places far from the Wissahickon Hills that makes the scent of locust bloom always something of a surprise to me.

A locust tree at the lane-end is so close to our house that I cannot escape its scent whenever the wind is west in its blossoming time. That time is toward the end of May. After I catch the first whiff of locust scent I always look up Township Line for the bloom on the larger trees there. One tree most years lifts a dome of solid white bloom against the sky. This dome stands out with particular boldness on days when the northeast is grey with clouds.

So it stood out one day's end I remember, moving uneasily in the wind, and luridly white under the wild light of sunset streaming out from under leaden clouds. Though storm threatened, our little place was alive with birds, and subduedly musical with song. Blackpolls were predominant, "see, see, see-ing" from the altheas and cherries, and even from the high oak-tops. They had been about all the time since I first noticed locust-scent on the air, a week ago, they and the olive-backed thrushes, and both in full song. Those birds added to the effect of otherwhere the scent of locust has always brought to me. The olive-brown thrushes, and the blackpolls so dapper in their black and white I know together on the high shoulders and summits of New Hampshire mountains, on the Sandwiches, far beyond the range of the locust.

Yet here on the Wissahickon Hills the three are closely associated in my mind, so many years have I noted the birds about when all our place was drenched with the heavy fragrance of the locust flowers. They are forever associated for me, the heavy fragrance of the white racemes of the locust flowers, the faint skirling of the modest-hued thrushes, the thin shrilling of the insect-voiced warblers. They are not at one, the three, the birds suggestive of northern places and high altitudes, and the locust blossoms taking

my thoughts to bottom lands in valleys of southern Pennsylvania and on to the southward. It would be hardly true to call the locust scent exotic. It is hardly that, but it is a heavy fragrance, to out-of-doors what the scent of the star-jasmine is to the greenhouse. Locust scent is even heavier, as it is richer, than the scent of jasmine. You can get too much of locust scent, it can cloy, but that is only on evenings of lifeless air, when the scent hangs heavily about sunken roads and in the lee of thickets out of the wind. On windy evenings that threaten storm the locust scent, widely dispersed throughout all our neighborhood, is refreshing and satisfying both, and suggestive of things sweet of the earth.

The scent of the wild grape is seldom about in the Wissahickon woods before the middle of June. It lasts a fortnight, the headiest scent all the year brings us. Although we have a vigorous vine of wild grape on our fence and sassafras trees, a vine that never fails to blossom fully, there are few times during its blossoming that you can catch the fragrance everywhere about the place. It is an evanescent fragrance. It is now here, and now there. It does not dwell for long in any one place. It comes and goes with every stir of air. It suggests exhilaration, wininess, lift, in its very quality, and not alone for its association with the wine-press. The chicken-grape is so small and of so dry a pulp as compared to fox-grape or Concord or Muscatel, that you hardly associate it even in its fruiting with Bacchic things. The scent of grape-bloom is as fresh a scent as that of spicewood in early spring, and more pervasive, despite its lightness and volatility and habit of thinning away to no scent at all.

There are a hundred places good to go to for the grape-smell in June. One is on the northern slope of the Wissahickon between Mom Rinker's Rock and the Monastery. Another is Paper Mill Lane on the west slope of the valley above Valley Green. Here we used to drive for the scent of grapes in bloom when I was a child. The hill up to Manatawna is fairly sharp, and old Nellie liked well to rest at each thank-you-ma'am. She sometimes was allowed so to do, for Father was as fond of grape-scent as is his son.

There is a subtle kind of intoxication in the scent of grape-bloom. It can carry you into abstraction from self, as can the song of the woodrobin, and to momentary loss of the sense of individuality. It can all but rap you away into dream. It makes you forget that you are drinking in its fragrance, it makes you forget all about itself, about grape-bloom. It transports you to some other plane of sense and of thought than the personal. Old John Kelpius would have said it gives the soul wings.

Close on the coming of grape-scent comes the overpoweringly sweet scent of catalpas. Like their kindred, the paulownias, the catalpas have established themselves on these hills, but, unlike the paulownias, they have not made themselves a woods-tree of the valley. It is on the tops of the broad-backed hills above the valley that you find the catalpas. Their scent is not one of the seven I would sing.

My sixth scent is that of clover, white clover and red. That is a scent, or rather those are allied scents, that I associate with all the three places on the hills in which I have lived. The scent of white clover is noticeable even on close-cut lawns. There it will bloom with full heads on stems so short that all the little plants, flowers and leaves together, will rise no more than an inch above the ground. Unless you set your lawnmower very close the white clover will bloom lustily and lend its fragrance to your lawn. You sometimes lose its scent because of the honeysuckle or woodbine growing up about your porch pillars and on your fences. The scent of honeysuckle is so dominant a scent that it can drown out many less emphatic scents. There are few tangles of honeysuckle, however, on our Wissahickon Hills, common as the vine is about the houses hereabouts.

Everywhere where there are fields, as well as everywhere there are lawns, the scent of clover is about. It is often red clover you smell from growing hayfields, a feature of our hills growing scarcer and scarcer with the years. It is with the upper stretches of the Wissahickon that I now associate the scent of red clover. It is a real country scent, and when it sweetens the air as I drive

into the Whitemarsh Valley I feel a kind of clearing of the lungs and the pall of suburbia slipping from my shoulders. It brings with it always, this scent of red clover, the thought of cows, cows sweet-breathed and placid, standing at ease in some half-shaded spot and quietly busy with cud-chewing. They move little, but tails now and then take to fly-slapping, and a head is tossed at whiles to clear their sides of the tormentors clustered in places out of reach of their tails.

Red clover, the sight of it growing, its scent on the air, is the most pastoral of all the countryside's effects. Red clover spells dairies, cream, butter-making, the peace and quiet of sunny farms. Where the scent of clover permeates the air there are meadow larks whistling, and redwings fluting, and orioles oboeing their clear calls. Little runs follow the roadside, runs in which old grey geese are teaching their yellow goslings to forage, and bruising spearmint so that its sharp aroma makes redolent all the air.

The clover is cut for hay while its blossoming is at its height, but the smell it spreads over all its neighborhood as it dries is other than the fragrance of its flowers. The fragrance of its dried flowers is a part of its fragrance drying and dried, of course, but there is another sweetness in its stems, and in the stems and blooms of the grasses that grow with it. And there are many stands of hay without clover among its grasses. Timothy you cut, too, while its bristly heads are covered with full bloom of little purple flowers. It is not timothy hay, however, or clover hay, that contributes the half of my seventh scent, the scent of new-mown meadow hay making in the sun, but less well-known grasses brought here from Europe in old time. There are native grasses, too, among stands of hay grass, but white top, red top, orchard grass and blue grass all seem to be foreigners.

Sweet vernal grass, too, that gives out its sweetness unreservedly as it dries, comes to us from Europe. It is sweet vernal grass that gives more than any other grass its sweetness to the countryside from just-cut hay. Mingled red clover and timothy give out a pleasant odor in drying, but it is the vernal grass lifts that unasser-

tive odor into an edged sweetness. The vernal grass does not occur often in large stands, but in patches, in low places and by woodsides. It might be too obtrusive, this scent, were it too constantly with us, but as we come upon it motoring past the places where it grows, it is with us one moment and gone the next.

The sweet grass of which the Indians make their baskets is another grass altogether, a grass of the salt marshes. I remember seeing an old Indian woman in Nova Scotia with sheafs of this grass beside her as she wove baskets in a camp with drawn-up canoes on the shore of Annapolis Basin just out from Digby. It was tall and sedgy. The baskets made of this grass retain the scent a long time, but we have no such way of keeping the scent of sweet vernal grass with us. Vernal grass is too slight for basket weaving, perhaps. It may well be, though, that we value the scent of it fresh cut in June all the more because it is so fleeting. For all the sweetness of hay in the barn that sweetness is as nothing beside the sweetness of the June meadow grass just laid low.

The scent of cut grass drying away to hay is perhaps the first scent of summer rather than the last scent of spring. Yet it follows so closely on the scents of grape-bloom and of clover-blossoms that I instinctively class it with them. To me the scents of summer are all less fresh and refreshing than these seven I have enumerated. The scent of corn in tassel is of another quality altogether, and so is the scent of buckwheat. Of the very essence of summer are the scents of pennyroyal and of blue-curls oozing out thymy sweetness on a sunny bank. A summer scent, too, is that of pond lilies, and that of basswood in bloom, and that of goldenrod. Already I have another seven, and the stores of summer scents no more than tapped. There is no end to the prodigality of nature in her bestowal of scents.

1929

XIII

For SPENCER ROBERTS

who luxuriates in our long summer days . . .

A COTTAGE *of the* EIGHTEEN-FORTIES

THE place lies to the westward of the railway station, as a country home should. It is good that a man, if he must go to the city daily for bread and butter, should walk, his face to the sun, on his way to the train of mornings, and it is sure ease to his heart to front the sunset as he comes home of evenings. The way from the station is a quarter mile by woodpath through tall second growth of oak and chestnut and beech, a short hundred yards of gneiss- and granite-mailed trolley road through open land, and then a quarter mile of lane between whitewashed fences. For all the beauty of light and shade and the little adventures with bird or squirrel in the hillside woods I love best the lane part of my daily journey. The lane, but a cart-track wide, is shaded here and there by trees, the larger isolated, the smaller in little groups. I enter it by three ragged old cedars and a much beclubbed wild cherry, but its dominant features here are two great chestnuts to the left and a single hemlock spire against the west. Further on come other old cherries and then the sassafras and bird-cherry bunches. In some places the trees arch the road, in others the long limbs of old chestnuts extend out laterally for its roofing. As the lane nears home it is protected by a huge black oak that, with the cherries along our fence, prevents, from late April until late November, more than a glimpse of the house until you are upon it. In the leafless half of the year you can see, for an eighth of a mile before you reach it, its long shingled back extending down to pump-shed and home-

made grape arbor. You have passed but three houses by the way and there are now but three in sight.

The little house of plastered stone with its eighteen-inch solid walls was built right on the lane by old-country Germans sixty years ago. The lane is far older, as cedars on it further to the eastward tell. It is probably one of the lanes run from Germantown Road to their woodlots on the Wissahickon Hills by the early settlers of Germantown. These men laid out their town with houses in earshot of each other on the highway to Philadelphia, and their lands extending in long narrow strips backward on either side of the highway. Dividing strip from strip they made narrow lanes and lined them with cedars that now speak their antiquity. I remember when there were cedars on the lane near the house, but now they are gone and the five great oaks whose tassels and acorns just escape the house as they drop in the lane, the one to the north and four to the west, tell of their own rather than of the lane's antiquity. Yet I suspect that they, and the even greater trees, oak and chestnut and buttonball, that tower up over a hundred feet above the old road that meets the lane at the foot of the lawn, were something more than mast two hundred years ago. Save for a weeping willow tree just southward and a Jappy catalpa southeastward the little house stands in the sun, but as you look at it from a distance from any point of the compass it appears to be backed by great trees. It stands about midway from front to back of the strip of land that now comprises its entire possessions, but that earlier, when the little house was a farmhouse, made only its home-yard. This strip lies along the lane shaped like the broad side of a wedge, whose length is three hundred and fifty feet, and whose breadth broadens from eighty feet as you meet the wedge headways coming from the station, to nearly one hundred feet as you reach its edge on the old highway, narrow and arched with high trees.

It is not a beautiful house by any means but it is rooted in its place as naturally as any of the great trees about, and at certain seasons of the year its trellised vines and its bowery setting give it no uncertain charm. Its curious shape suggests to all comers far

CHERRIES IN BLOW, 1903

older houses abroad. It is low, its ridgepole being only twenty-six feet above the ground, and the roofs extending down steeply from that ridgepole are very uneven in length, the front shingles pitching down only twelve feet to end two stories above the ground, while the back shingles stretch for forty-two feet until they meet the pump-shed only head-room over six feet from the ground. This lowness and this long sweep of shingles serve only to make it appear to cling more closely to the earth, an effect that is offset a little by its scarcely more than twenty-seven feet of breadth. It is bound to earth more closely yet by great cables of trumpet vine and by innumerable strands of virginia creeper amid which twist roses and clematis and coral honeysuckle in their effort to make the house one with the greenery of its neighborhood.

It was built, I am sure, from a carpenter's building book, such as was commonly used from a hundred to fifty years ago. I have not found the particular book that pictures it, but I have found its mate in proportions and measurements, though like most of its neighbors in Flushing, Long Island, its material is clapboards and not stone and plaster. The house on the Wissahickon Hills was built from stone quarried and timber cut on the place. The lath that bore its old shingle roof are oak so hard that they turn any nail. When we reshingled the roof we had to lay lath of cypress between these old fellows of black oak to carry the new shingles.

The German builders of the house were fond of fruit and planted their place well with apples and cherries and pears, as well as the lesser fruits. That was sixty years ago, and many of the trees are gone. The apples were cut down. The cherries have died, all save some pie cherries, from which a numerous progeny has sprung up around the old trees. Many of the pears are gone; but there is still enough bloom of pear and cherry to make the little place smell orchardy in late April and early May. But its grape flowers scent the air more heavily and sweetly. There are many grape vines, wine grapes as well as Concords, you may trust the Germans for that. Later come the scent of catalpa and the various fragrances of the hosts of old-fashioned flowers.

It was twenty-five years ago that I stumbled on the place, led by a cottontail we had gotten up in the field that lies between the place and the woods to the southeast. The rabbit ran into the old barn, and we followed it in, dog and boys, the latter thinking it deserted. We were soon undeceived, for an old German woman chevied us out with promptness and extreme vigor. We recognized her as a redoubtable market-woman, who drove her own route, and it was said, ploughed her own fields. It was in her régime that the place was much larger, as much larger as the old barn, built of timber felled on the place, was then the little wagon-shed that stands on its site in the backyard now. Afterwards I came here for milk and got to know the currant and gooseberry and raspberry bushes, whose descendants still linger on, none save the raspberries in very thriving condition. But from raspberries and pears and cherries and grapes there is still plenty of fruit to eat as it ripens and to preserve for winter. The old ground still throws good crops of peas and beans and lettuces, as well as of the many flowers.

Come home with me some evening of early June two hours earlier than sunset so that no pomp and glory of the skies may distract your attention from the sweet homeliness of the place. The woodrobins have sung to us through our quarter mile of woodland, the bluebird of the lane has gurgled to us his "purity, purity"; and as we are nearing the house now birds are noisy on all quarters. I am distracted as to whether to first call your attention to the meadow lark in the grass field westward, the tanager in the oak overhead or the three woodrobins singing antiphonally from woodland and roadside and our Sheldon pear tree. But I shall begin showing you the place bit by bit. First, over the whitewashed three-board fence is the seed-bed for flowers, between the road and the lilac bushes. It is but just planted with wallflower and sweet-william, with phlox and foxgloves, with canterbury bells, and hollyhocks. Then come salad patch, sticked peas and grape vines, and on the far side of the arbor the strawberries. You are sniffing the air now, wondering what is the sweetness of the grape flowers, and the next moment you are drinking deep of their delicious scent.

But I hurry you on past the house and lead you to the little front porch, endangering your clothes as you brush by the sweet briar in bloom at the house-corner. Woodbines and grape twist together up the porch posts, but you hardly notice them as you look at the bushy rhododendron in full bloom at the furthest corner of the bed that bends half round the porch to the south. The irises have dropped now but the yellow lilies are hanging their bells where two weeks later the old red lilies will lift, and where are many warm-hearted roses between you and the rhododendron. This way you looked first; now you turn to look across the trim lawn, broken by old pear trees and a wistaria bush. Beyond the sweet briar to the left, whose leaves you have instinctively been crushing in your fingers, you have caught glimpses of foxgloves, purple and white and pink, spiking up their heads as high as your own. Now you move so that you can see completely the large bed of them extending along the south fence until it meets the raspberries that carry the low bank of greenery back as far as the house. Back of the foxgloves hollyhocks are pushing up; in front of them great masses of sweet-william stand close marshalled, white and red and pink; and low in front of the sweet-william and next the fine grass of the lawn garden-pinks send up tufts of spicy bloom. Your eyes move across to the right, where again, in the far corner of the place, are tall foxgloves and, nearer, columbines and hollyhocks where the spirea hedge ends and reveals the whitewashed paling fence that cuts off the place from the quiet lane.

You will be walked around and compelled to duly admire all these things and then you must go back past the south side of the house to be shown red roses climbing among the trellised vines and leaning in at the one little third-story window the house boasts on this side. You will look admiringly, if you are anything of a connoisseur in such matters, at the great box-bushes and at the big snowball bush only the other day as thick with bloom as the box-bushes now with leaves. Then, turning to the vegetable garden, which extends to the rear of the place on either side of a strip of lawn that runs back in the center, you must compliment the lima

beans, and the peas, grey-green bushy vines seeking greater heights than the six-foot brush to which they cling, and note how their place is separated from the lawn by prim althea hedge and foxgloves and larkspur and sweet peas.

This is all you will be asked to notice except that the domain is cut off from the world by high walls of green, save to the southeast, and even in this direction after you have looked across a field, a wood's-edge only a hundred yards away again raises a wall. In other directions you may look out, for the walls of green are pillared off the ground by brown and grey trunks, yet wherever you look you may never look far enough to lose the sense of privacy that was your feeling as soon as you were here. You may look northwest across grass fields to great trees, or southwest down the valley of a little stream to the Wissahickon woods, or westward past the old white house to the low green hill that hides the sunsets early. To the near top of this green hill is a walk for late afternoon. You pass by shaded lane and sunken road, slide back the bars, and as you push onward through the grass there opens up before you more and more of the Wissahickon Valley until, when you have reached a great dying oak, it is over the far Schuylkill Hills you watch the sun go down.

We will show you the sunset, and we will hold you to sit on the porch after dinner to watch the rabbits come out to nibble the clover in the lawn, and to follow the moon as it comes up over the woods and swings around until it hangs large and low behind the windows of our three sassafras trees, so beautiful in their irregularity since the great ice-storm. The solitary frog in the pond across the road will croak at solemn intervals, the bats will wheel and squeak over the lawn, and the screech owls will come, a whole family of them, father, mother and two young, and softly hoot and whisper in the moon-drenched sassafrases.

Or will you come home with me of an October afternoon when our sassafras trees are red and gold, or dark red, or deep yellow, as the year may have painted them, and the woods are rustling with falling leaves? You will be soothed or excited as your mood is

by the vivid coloring of our wood's edge and you will grow eloquent over the sweet late corn, spoil of my fork and hoe, that we will give you for dinner, and over the lima beans, sweet and mealy as chestnuts. Or shall it be at still winter sunset, when you will thrill with the fires on the hills westward that die away in reds and golds banded above an earth a full foot deep with snow? Then you will hold the great oaks that stand black against the sunset reds and golds more beautiful than ever they were in the leafy fleece of spring, the lush green of summer, or in autumn's red-brown. These I think are the walks homeward that I love best, for home never seems so much home as on eves of hard black frost when I hurry along the snow-plough furrow right into the heart of the dazzling west. Yet when the earth rolls nearer the sun and there come evenings when long lines of blackbirds clack across gold-green sunset skies, when the hylas in the swamp near the station and the weeping willow by my home tell me spring is near, I wonder is winter better than this! And so I wonder of May eves when I can almost feel myself laved in the apple-scent from the trees in the orchard by the lane-side as I pass. It is hard to tell what time of year the country life is best!

The little house has but eight rooms. I say eight, for although two of them are so small you may hardly turn around in them and although you are sure to bump your head until long acquaintance has made you wary, the two narrow halls added to the two little hall-rooms justify me in putting the total at eight. These halls, the kitchen at the end of the lower, the hall-room at the end of the upper and the hall-room that shares the third story with a large low-ceilinged old chamber were added when the house was enlarged twenty years ago. Then it passed from a farmhouse of five rooms into a city-folk's summer residence of eight. Yet such was our elder's practice of stowing away children that more people were put into the house then than at any time since. The addition had to be made to the sunny side because the old house was built flush with the lane. It was useless to attempt re-arranging the old rooms, whose walls are adamantine, as I who have spent two hours and a

half in drilling two inches into their solid stone with a half-inch diamond drill have good cause to know.

Your length from the front door, commonplace modern pine stairs lead to the second story, but turn into the room at your left and you are back in the Germantown of the early Nineteenth Century. Although built only sixty years ago the house was fashioned after an older style. As out-of-doors you are miles away from Suburbia only a mile distant, and as the simple yard and the prospect from it cause a hundred years to fall from Time, so it is here indoors. The walls, bare of paper, are washed ivory-white where a century ago would have been the blue-white of whitewash; the furniture is mahogany, in style Eighteenth Century, some of it from that old time and all of it in the manner of that old time; the fireplace's uneven hearth of red brick and the acorn-topped andirons take you back too, but furthest take you, if you notice them, the hardware of the doors, latches, turnbuckles and knobs, and the broad pine boards in door-jambs and closets. Some of these boards are twenty inches wide—a rarity of rarities in white pine today. If you begin to tinker with the old hinges you will find them fastened on with pointless screws for which holes had to be augered out at their exact length. The very hangings are of old-looking silks, of such red stuffs as our ancestors were wont to get their seafaring associates to bring home to them from China. Only the pictures and some of the books and rugs are new.

The general effect of the room is simple comfort and harmony. The mahogany reds of the furniture, long plain sofa with straight lines, Sheraton tables, chairs from Nantucket rocker to Windsor, secretary bookcase with scroll top and twisted flames, stand out against the ivory-tinted walls, with which the white-painted bookshelves built in between the three front windows, the mantelpiece and the woodwork generally, are in keeping. The hangings are old red, the coverings old red and green, the dominant tone of the rugs on the mattinged floor old red. The other prominent colors in the room are found in the gilt of the picture frames and mirror and in the brass of the candlesticks and lamps. The general effect of the

many books, despite a considerable quota of old calf and red, is a dark blue, which is as unobtrusive as the old blue in the rugs. So many of the pictures are reproductions or black and white that they in themselves add little of color to the room while they tell you their owners care much for out-of-doors and things Irish, but what color they do add is again blue. And in so far as the many pieces of bric-a-brac, old plates and vases, add anything of color, that too is blue. On entering the room you would scarcely notice the blue, and perhaps for a little while the only impression would be that of ivory-white and mahogany red.

The particular effect that the room makes is that it is the expression of the lives of the people that live here. Old furniture shops have been ransacked, literally from store-room in cellar to workshop in roof, or family treasures pilfered to get this furniture; these books have been bought to read and they are "books that are books," embodied dreams and thoughts and experiences of men, books made out of living; these pictures all have associations with known people and loved places.

Entering the dining room you come face to face with a great fireplace that was the cooking place of the farmhouse. Not many years since the kettle that fed the family was slung by a chain from a rod in the chimney and the fire beneath it built with logs cut in the woodlot nearby. In the dining room you again meet mahogany of the late Eighteenth Century, corner cupboard, pier-table, center table, side-table, and sideboard whose simple design is such a credit to Hepplewhite that it must be remembered as his; and again ivory tinted walls. But instead of old red and curtaining here is a dull yellow, of a stuff similar to that in the living room. The china, Canton of course, is stood up on a great plate-rack over the sideboard and high piled on shelves alongside of the fireplace. Above the fireplace is as simple a mantel as that of the living room and above the mantel—for by the house's greatest fireplace the household gods should be—an engraving of Lincoln. Nearby is an engraving of the Declaration of Independence below its signers "in conclave assembled," and not far away a photograph of Words-

worth as he was in the Dove Cottage days, for it is that Wordsworth that is held of highest account.

Upstairs the two bedrooms reveal again mahogany furniture against ivory tinted walls, with hangings in one room of yellow-flowered chintz and coverings in the other of old blue. From both rooms the windows look on beautiful bits of the Wissahickon Hills, framed often in great oak boughs and broken by few houses. Two of these, the old white house across the road, and its farmhouse higher on the hill, are symbols of the past we so love and in themselves buildings of simple charm. On the bedroom walls family pictures of several generations reveal that love of old things to which so much else in the house and its surroundings attest.

Vines from the trellised walls of the house tap against the windows. The trumpet vines lure humming birds in summer. In the flowers they feed and on the stiff sprays they perch and preen their burnished feathers. The Virginia creepers bring scores of birds in the fall to feed on their berries. Often brown thrashers seize the windowsills as points of vantage whence they may creep along the trellis bars after the blue clusters. Hermit thrushes stay with us until late in November, so plentiful is the food supply the vines offer. Not far from water and woodland as the house is and with trees and open fields and brush at hand birds are always about. The great supply of wild and bird cherries and creeper berries keeps many at hand from nesting season on until bleakest frost. Then there are the birds that nest or winter with us. Even at Christmas we have the song-sparrows and the snowbirds, the cardinals and Carolina wrens, the titmice and nuthatches and downy woodpeckers. The warbler migration peoples our trees in May and again in September, and on April evenings we hear the whippoorwill as he passes through. All year there is the cawing of crows and, some years, all year the chatter of blue jays. Always there are with us the rabbits and squirrels and the many tribes of wild mice. Ten minutes' walk takes us to the aloofness of hemlocks and less to great rocks that jut out in the ravine of the Wissahickon

where we sit of summer evenings and watch the night herons fly up and down through the dusk.

In the house itself the happiest hours are those of winter evenings when loud winds are up. Then we sit by the fire of wood the ice-storms have supplied from our own trees and talk of all under the sun. There are no lamps lit, but the walls are warm with the firelight. Our hearts grow cheerier with every wail of the northwest, with every rasp of snow sharp as sand against the window. It brings closer the sense of home when the night so contrasts our ruddy hearth with the lonely wind and the helpless driven snow.

1904

·DOVES·

IT IS perhaps their likeness to the domestic pigeon that makes us so fond of mourning doves. What in wild nature is like what we have been familiar with in the homeyard from childhood has always precedence in our affections over the later known. The doves will roost in the crabapple tree close by the house when they come to us in March, but that is because it leafs out so early and makes so good cover for them, and not because they trust us and enjoy our proximity. The doves will come down to the hen-coops and pick up the scratch feed I throw there for the Dominiques and their chicks, but not when I am by. They will hurtle away from the lawn with whistle of wings like stones out of a sling if I happen round the corner of the house suddenly upon them. They will not always come to rest in the wood's edge a hundred yards away but will throw themselves up and over the woods and disappear at their projectile-like speed as if they wished to put broad miles between me and themselves before they again lighted.

Yet the doves spend many hours close to the house. It is here I hear them in the chill grey of some March morning, cooing and cooing and cooing. They seem always to have reached home again in the night after their long journey from the southern states, where they have wintered. They go and come all day long, cooing incessantly in these first days following their arrival all the hours they are about. They coo with particular fervor toward nightfall, and they awaken and coo from time to time during the night. Later on, in April and May, they are quieter, but there is dove music about our place off and on, through many of the daylight hours, until we go away for the summer in mid-June.

In those old years when we spent all our summers as well as our

falls and winters and springs on these hills, the doves were not so plenty as they are now. I cannot therefore speak from much experience of their ways during July and August. They are still about and as busy with swift errands hither and yon when we return in late September as they were all spring through. They are ceaselessly active and they seem to lose none of their vigor with the decline of the year. They moult, I suppose, while we are in New Hampshire, a countryside beyond their range. At any rate, we find them in full feather and high fettle during all the fall. The doves do not leave us some years until late October and even November, when their presence gives rise to the annual reappearance of stories of wild pigeons still extant.

There is no more beautiful bird than the mourning dove. It is a harmony of soft hues, greyish blue predominating, but with shading of olive on back and flushes of rosy purple on breast and neck. The outer feathers of the tail, tipped with white, stand out conspicuously when the bird flutters down to the ground and parades about.

There is a sense of swiftness and power, of buoyancy and intense life about the dove that is in sharp contrast to its soft bloom of plumage and even softer timbre of voice. In it gentleness and strength, activity and immobility are strangely at one. After coursing round and round in great circles of three hundred yards and more for five minutes, it will come to rest in one of our great black oaks, and remain as fixedly there for another five minutes, or fifteen even, as if it were cut from stone. Then it will round and round again, and disappear, to announce its unseen return by cooing and cooing and cooing from sassafras or crab apple or black oak.

You will discover that the dove has most winning ways if you are so situated you may watch it feeding its mate or its young. No bluebird of them all can convey a choice titbit to its brooding mate with more of high courtesy than is the dove's as he settles down on a sassafras limb beside the loose platform of sticks on which his wife is incubating, and passes over to her the grain he has filched from the hen-coop below. He is most patient, too, with his great soft squab, importunate as any bluerock of the cote, when that

clumsy youngling insists on accompanying him to the hen-coops. I have seen the old bird pick up grain after grain of wheat and cracked corn and pass it over to the young when that fellow would seem from size and feather well able to forage for himself.

The two dove eggs of dead white look even more fragile than do most birds' eggs as they rest in seeming peril in that cuckoo-like nest of so tenuously piled twigs. And yet the dove again and again brings off its small brood successfully. The doves have greatly increased in numbers on our Wissahickon Hills during the past decade. They were as rare here thirty years ago as the rain crow. Today they are as plenty as the catbirds. I often flush a pair of doves from our lane as I come home, and another pair from the back yard, and another pair from the front yard. There is no bird, by the bye, you so constantly come on in pairs as the mourning dove. In pairs you find little brown creepers and downy woodpeckers in winter, but all the time the doves are with us you find them in pairs. Sometimes the two young will bring a family party to four. Such are not far to seek after the breeding season.

No more than one pair of doves has ever nested on our acre, but for five years now we have had three pairs or more in our immediate neighborhood. Protection has brought back the doves, as it has brought back the kingfishers and blue jays, but it has brought back the doves in greatest numbers. The doves are not so vivid in hue or ways as jays and kingfishers, but they have a charm of their own, the charm of softly blended grey and pearl and blue, the charm of softness and gentleness, the charm of low-voiced content with their lot.

1930

·'POSSUMS AND PERSIMMONS·

'POSSUMS and persimmons I heard talked about together even before that youthful day when there first fell upon my ears the cadences of

'Possum in de gum-tree,
Cooney in de hollow.

I am not going to dogmatize as to which of the trees is more properly associated with *Didelphys virginiana.* As a matter of fact I never found an opossum in either tree. In my experience he has inhabited big chestnut trees and big cherry trees with great cavities in them, holes under rocks, an old ice-house, and woodpiles. Aunt Rachel and Uncle Pline, however, used to tell me that the opossums of northern Chester County, about their childhood's home in Upper Uwchlan, were generally caught when they came out of the woods for the persimmons that grew on trees in a fence-row between fields. They had a saying, too, that associated the fruit and the varmint, "'Possums and persimmons are not fit to eat till after frost." As to that I can bear little pertinent testimony. I had 'possum put before me only once, and then it looked so greasy I could not go it. Persimmons I can admire when they dot, like little golden oranges, their thinning leaves, and even more when they are gathered in a bowl of old blue china. Pyramided there, about the transfer-printed courthouses or what not, they harmonize well in their dark yellow brown with the potters' blue of the bowl. In my sampling of persimmons I have been unfortunate. Those of our hills are good neither before nor after frost. Before frost they are unpleasantly astringent, drawing your mouth up into the proverbial pucker of "plums, prunes and prisms." After frost they are insipid, mushily insipid, and as seedy as pomegranates.

The persimmon is not a common tree on the Wissahickon Hills. There used to be several of them on a road that ran along the Cresheim Creek east of the East Township Line, and a few grew in another fence-row in Manatawna on the western side of the creek. There were single trees in five or six places elsewhere. I made the rounds of these persimmon trees every other year or so in my young years, for all wild fruit seemed precious in the finding to me then. I sometimes gathered only hard persimmons, if I were a little too early in my visits. Even those would be hard that had fallen or had been shaken off by some marauder, an opossum possibly, or a crow. These hard fruit never ripened satisfactorily at home, but at that they were scarcely more unpalatable than the really ripe ones I picked up those years I came upon them after frost.

The opossum is much plentier than the persimmon in the gorge of the Lower Wissahickon, and along its tributary runs. The first beast I ever saw skinned was an opossum caught by two boys just back of our place on Tulpehocken Street. At the dame school I was attending at this time we were thrilled one morning by hearing of a mother opossum with five young brought in the previous night. Unfortunately she had made a successful exit with all her family from the third-story room into which she had been turned for safe keeping. The window was not tightly closed. She had pushed it open, and descended to the ground, by the rain-pipe, it must have been. Later an opossum that had been caught in the very heart of Germantown, on Greene Street below Coulter, was proudly exhibited in a barrel by the boy who had heard it scuttling about the garbage bucket by the back door and had caught it before it could shuffle off.

There were several opossum episodes in our first years on Upsal Street. The first excitement was on an evening in early summer. Word was brought to us sitting on the porch of a racket in the hen-house. Thinking of human invaders only three of us descended upon the hen-house. One of the two men who chanced to be visiting us was armed with his father's pet cane. He doughtily headed the trio, but when we reached the hen-house no thief was in sight. Four

fowls with their heads off were discovered after a lantern was fetched and a careful examination. This also finally discovered the opossum cowering in a corner of the roost. He met his death quickly, but at the cost of the prized cane. Somehow the heavy ironwood broke as if it were no more than a hemlock lath.

After this we had a respite from opossum visits until fall, when I found a pullet decapitated. I set a box-trap and caught Mrs. 'Possum and four half-grown young, one after the other. I gave them alive to Frank, who promised to return one of the young ones roasted and stuffed with sweet potatoes, as soon as it could be properly fattened. We never got him, nor Frank, according to his story, any of the others. He told us that he spoke to his neighbors of the opossums. After they disappeared he made inquiry of the neighbors. He reported to us that one of them had said: "Pears to me I mus' hab seen dat fella. Is a 'possum a kin' of grey-looken bees' 'bout the size of a cat? I 'member I jus' cross the path of such a fella strollen down de yalley one night. I guess he mus' hab gone visitin'." Frank was playing innocent, perhaps, or it may be that he really spoke in all innocence.

Opossums never pall on me. When I hear a noise about the hen-houses at night and I find an opossum there I am as pleased as if I were ten. The last one I discovered in a coop where young fowls roosted. He was nosing them around when I arrived but he had hurt none of them. It was easy to pick him up by the tail and fetch him into the house. After he had been duly exhibited to the family, and had "played 'possum" on the living-room hearth, he was put into a box covered with cellar-window wire. He was well fed for a week, admired by all and sundry who happened by and finally freed within the Park limits.

Twice this winter a dead opossum has been found in our neighborhood. One was flattened out on the road, and the other I stumbled over just back of our place, very evidently the victim of dogs. It is not only the colored brethren who discuss opossums largely. Workmen from Europe, especially Italians, are very curious about the beast. So it has been since word of the opossum was first brought

back to Europe from America. He has a prominent place in all travellers' tales and books on natural history. Pastorius, writing to Europe from Germantown calls the opossum "das seltsame Thier Possam." This letter, included in his *Journey to Pennsylvania in the year 1683*, leads the editor of the Memmingen reprint of 1792 to a considerable footnote about "the strange beast." The footnote runs as follows: "The opossum (*Didelphis Marsupialis*). The female has a pouch in the belly, which she can open and shut at will. The teats lie in its bottom. The young come into being very small, and are born again, one might say, at a premature birth. They hide themselves immediately in this refuge, nourishing themselves there on their mother's milk. They stay in the pouch until they are perfected, when they are, as it were, born anew. The pouch is still a place of refuge for them, sometimes, after birth."

Simpler accounts were everywhere in print, down to the rhymes of schoolbooks for very young children. In an A B C book in German that I picked up not far from the headwaters of the Wissahickon there is not only a delectable quatrain about *Didelphis* but a further couplet driving home a little moral from the beast's habit of feigning death. There are those who think that this apparent coma is not consciously assumed but the result of paralyzing fear. Very wide awake, however, is Mrs. 'Possum in the little colored woodcut accompanying the rhymes. She stands up kangaroo-wise on her hind legs, proudly exhibiting the young protruding from her pouch. In the background are six trees that look far more like palms than persimmons. The title page to this book is gone, and the cover badly rubbed. There is no clue to where it was printed and little to its date. It looks early Nineteenth Century to me, but it might be earlier.

It is not so gentle in spirit in its admonitions to children as are the "rules of conduct" of Christopher Dock (1689–1771), schoolmaster in Germantown, Skippack, and Salford, but it is a kindly book for all that, and a godly. It has Bible sayings, prayers, and hymns, but dearer to the children who studied it, God-fearing as they no doubt were, must have been the picture of the cock on the

cover, the lettered animal pictures on the inside of the cover, and the opossum semi-rampant under letter O. Perhaps the book was printed by Saur in Germantown, as was Dock's *Schul-Ordnung* in 1770. Or it may have been printed by Billmeyer in Germantown, or at Skippack or Sumneytown or New Berlin when those places, like so many all along the Atlantic seaboard, had printing shops that helped to keep learning alive in back-country places. One of the best accounts of the opossum is that of *The Book of Nature*, Philadelphia, 1834, which is as nearly a life-history of the beast as was possible in its time. The copperplate illustration of *Didelphis Virginiana* accompanying this account shows her with the "grin," or opening of the mouth so characteristic of her behavior when caught and driven to front her enemies. Usually in my experience, the opossum does not resort to "playing 'possum" until she has tried to hold you off by a hissing or indrawing of breath and a show of teeth. This account supports the Uwchlan belief as to 'possums and persimmons. It says: "Among the wild fruits the persimmon (*Diospyros Virginiana*) is a great favorite, and it is generally after this fruit is in perfection that the opossum is killed by the country people for the market."

To serve as a warning to the sinner, to delight the child and to point a proverb would seem to be enough glory for the opossum, in addition to its fabled delectability as food. Yet its influence goes further. It has given us a nickname for boys. All through the districts of Pennsylvania where the opossum flourishes you will find "'Possum This, and 'Possum That." The nickname is used not always because of a fancied likeness between boy and beast, but to indicate acumen under the mark of quiet ways and expressionless face. That the opossum has in reality no such acumen does not matter. His habit of feigning death, and his chance escaping from death through such feigning, sets him apart from all other beasts. In country belief he is "up to snuff." In popular lore he passes as a symbol of cunning. He has ways, it is believed, that, copied, would help a man in a game of poker. Is it any wonder, then, that he has a celebrity greater than that of any American animal,

humble, slow, and ineffectual as he seems. The persimmon, despite the cultivation of the Japanese variety, would have little place in our interest north of Mason and Dixon's Line were it not associated with the opossum. It is the fruit's presence in the phrase, "'Possums and persimmons" that retains for it the attention of men.

1929

XIV

For AUNT NAN HOYT

who has made life easier for so many of us . . .

The OLD STOCK

IT MUST be that something of what sort we are who live on these Wissahickon Hills has, however inadvertently, crept into what I have written of the hills themselves. It will have been judged, I expect, that we are not very different from neighborly folks anywhere in our country. We are, of course, Pennsylvanians, of the southeastern corner of the state, the product of two centuries of prosperity. We of Germantown and Roxborough, Chestnut Hill and Barren Hill, Whitemarsh and Ambler, Gwynedd and Montgomery Square are many of us still of the old Quietist stocks, German or English, Welsh or Irish, that naturally were attracted to Pennsylvania in colonial times. We are, however, losing the Friendly savor that was once ours.

Our neighbors in Philadelphia suburbs outside of the Wissahickon watershed say that we of Germantown, for instance, are Germantowny. That means that we are a little queer, a little different from other folks, a little set in our ways, a little too individual. Perhaps we are all that, but if we are, we are not keenly aware of it. So say not only the Main Liners of Germantowners but all other outsiders of the people of the other towns of the hills. We, like most Americans, do not care greatly what these outsiders say of us. We say: "They say. What do they say? Let them say!" We are very American in that attitude. We are, a good few of us, descended from settlers in this neighborhood in early eighteenth-century times and even late seventeenth-century times. There are those of us of the sixth and seventh generations of Americans. There have always been enough of the old stock among us to incline newcomers to our ways. The traditions of the early settlers on the Wissahickon Hills have been handed down to today.

Like other Pennsylvanians of the southeastern corner of the state, and like certain Jerseymen of southern New Jersey and like

Delawareans of Newcastle county, we are not wholly happy about strangers until we have them "placed." That is, we want to know what sort they are, what their past has been, what their future is likely to be, before we take them in. Ancestry counts with us, but not unduly. Congeniality of taste, a love of old things, a habit of looking backward as well as around us and ahead, are held desirable traits in neighbors.

We like old houses with heirlooms in them. We like families who have had a settled sense of the values in life for a century or two. We care for money, but we care more for the comforts and amenities that money makes possible. We like pleasant homes, set amid well-planted grounds. We are devoted arborists, and collectors of this and that, lovers of antiques.

We have a good deal of local pride, but it in few people takes the form of worship of bigness. We like what is choice and rare and old. We minimize what the crowd says. We are rather sure of ourselves. We like to do things for ourselves. We like chores, manual labor, fussing over hobbies. We are workers, most of us, and few of us are fond of parade and show. There is more that is Quaker-like about us than is revealed at a first glance, for all that we grow less Quaker-like year by year. We are still, for this motoring age, stout walkers. We are fond of out-of-doors. We are unafraid of sweat. We are unashamed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Conservative though we are, we are devoted to "reform" in political and social matters. We own to an interest in natural science more gladly than to an interest in art. We are interested in art, and intellectual things generally, but we are not sure that we ought to admit it.

I do not mean for a moment that we are all of this pattern, but merely that this pattern is dominant among us.

We deplore the passing of the old ways, that cricket is played rarely any more, that the *ignobile vulgus* crowds the roads with automobiles on Sunday, that there are so many foreigners about, that you know so few of the people that go to town with you in the train of mornings. With so much change about us on the hills

back from the Wissahickon Valley, we are the more thankful that the valley itself and some part of the hills above it remain as we have always known them. We rejoice that in a world of change the Wissahickon in its general effects is as it was yesterday, and day before yesterday, and the day before that. The Wissahickon is treasured by us, for itself, for its aloofness and its beauty, and for the tang of the wild there is still about it, and as a survival of what large regions of America were like in colonial days.

We do not lose our characteristics or our love of our neighborhood, we of the Wissahickon Hills, even when long expatriated from home. A patriarch of the blood of our neighborhood wished to see a relative of his who still lived on the hills. He went out from Philadelphia by train to a station he had known long before. It was more than thirty years since he had lived hereabouts but he expected to find his way to his destination without difficulty. When he got out of the train, however, nothing was as it used to be. The roads ran in strange directions. Trees that had been landmarks were gone. Apartment houses rose where he had picked arbutus in his youth. He was, of course, a stout walker, and he prided himself on his instinctive knowledge of the points of the compass. What was a mile uphill to a hale fellow of eighty?

He trudged his mile, but he did not come to his relative's house. He rang the door-bell of a house to ask his way. The kindly newcomers who lived here had never heard of Mrs. Blank or of the name of the road on which she lived. Township Line had become Wissahickon Avenue, but the old gentleman had forgotten the change of name. He remembered things as they had been in his youth. That Mrs. Blank was not known as nearly flabbergasted him as a man of his serenity could be flabbergasted. Not to know of folks born and bred here and living here all their lives was a condition of affairs he could not fathom. And not even to know the name Blank! Why, in old days, everybody knew the names of all Germantowners, even if they didn't call on them. He felt like a Rip Van Winkle.

The kindly newcomers looked up the desired name in the tele-

phone book, and, calling up, found his folks for the old gentleman. They took him over by car. The old gentleman was very much obliged to them, and he told them that he was. He felt, however, that such a service was due him, both because of that neighborliness to which he was born, and because he was one of the old stock returning to the scenes of his childhood. Those who carried him to his goal were, after all, privileged in living among the old stock. They should realize they had duties toward those to the manner born.

There are few who can resist this old gentleman. He is courtesy's self, with a distinguished bearing, and inches above six feet. His head of hair rivals the mop of William Morris. It is snow-white, thick, wavy, fairly long, and balanced by a beard more impressive even than that of "the idle singer of an empty day." This old gentleman of the old stock has a habit of knitting his brows when he is in perplexity. His black eyes flash in accompaniment to this knitting of the brows. And with his perplexity his words retire to the recesses of his chest. He is the friendliest person in the world, one who hobnobs with all sorts and conditions of men, but he is quite sure of his own gentility and of the importance of all in any way connected with him.

A trying life has not warped him, or soured him to the slightest degree, or changed his sense of values. Although he can no longer "go, and be, and do, and have," as he could in his youth, the old gentleman still has a way with him, complete self-confidence, and all the insignia of caste. He never sought social recognition. He always calmly assumed that he had it, and that assumption was acquiesced in by people wherever he chanced to live. He has known many men of power, financiers and artists both, and they all welcomed him, in his prime, as one of themselves. Now, despite leaner years, he is a dignified figure, at ease with himself and with the world.

It is a woman of the hills who greets her friends whom she has not seen for years with the cheerful salutation: "Have you lost your money yet?" She was brought up, perhaps, on that old prov-

erb that it is "three generations from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves in America." That may be a true proverb, but there are more than a few on the hills who manage to hold on to enough to keep them in fair comfort even in these days of expensive living. The old gentleman is a sort of exception, but then he left the hills for the West, where they have more expansive ideas. He has still, however, his poise and calm demeanor. No difficulties can force him out of them. In his ability to take the world as it comes he is worthy of the stock from which he is sprung.

He is proud of the neighborhood that gave him birth. Cosmopolitan though he is, he is still Germantowny. Years of life in the West and in Europe, knowledge of the beautiful places of half the world, have not weaned him from his belief that the Wissahickon is the most picturesque of lowland streams. He swam in it as a boy; he fished in it; he boated on it in summer, and skated on it in winter. He remembers it as it is at all hours and at all seasons. With a hundred pictures of it in his head he backs it for beauty against all comparable creeks in the half of the world he knows.

It was said that she had never married because the man she loved had died in his youth. It was true that he had, but that she did not wed another was because, I take it, she was too formidable. It is reported, on good authority, that young men fled before the lash of her tongue. She was not so well-born as she thought she was, but she was well-born. She was not so poor as she thought she was, but she was in straitened circumstances. She had once had a good deal of money, and when the larger part of it had wasted away she compelled other people to do the things for her that she had been used to, but that she could not do with her lessened income. She asked for the escort of other people on her goings hither and yon. She visited around at pleasant country houses, announcing to the hosts she had chosen when she would descend upon them. She began her rounds in May and continued them until frost had killed the katy-dids.

She was a bit of a ghoul, liking to visit people when there was a death in the family and to "see them through the funeral." She always kept her own house open, however, so she could return to it if her campaign in the country was not so pleasant as she had anticipated. She was not a disagreeable person, she was only a managing person. She had a fierce pride of a kind, almost a man's joviality, and a high-handed way of carrying things through. She was jolly company, although she laughed a little too much at her own jokes. She was apt at stories, full of gossip, a stirring, stimulating person.

She sat on the high bench at meeting, but she did not often preach. Her dress was always black, but not strictly Friendly. She had the pale blue eyes of the soldier, a pompadour in days when nobody else wore a pompadour, a nose curved like a hawk's beak, and an authoritative manner.

I saw her prove herself one wild day of December. It was shortly after the advent of trolleys in her town. She was past seventy at the time, but there was nothing of the weakness of age about her. She was trudging sturdily along a sidewalk sharply downhill when she heard a trolley approaching. She walked out into the street. It was about the middle of the block, about halfway between two stopping-places for the car. The track was slippery with the rain that froze as it fell. She furled her umbrella and held it up commandingly. The motorman put on the brakes. The car stopped suddenly. She got in, with only a slight nod of her head in acknowledgment of the unusual favor. As it is written: "When the strong command, obedience is best."

It was her grand manner that had intimidated the motorman. What did her rather dowdy dress and country-looking umbrella matter when there was that about her would not brook disobedience? It was her grand manner that made you forgive her for being magisterial. I never saw that manner in better practice than on one First Day morning. There was an old law in Pennsylvania, she held, that gave you the right to pass toll-gates without pay if you were on your way to meeting. Our route led us past two toll-

gates. We ran them blithely, the old lady shouting out to the troubled gate-keepers "Thee can't charge us toll, we're going to meeting." I was wondering what would be our fate on the way home, but that was not put to the test, as we went home another and toll-gateless way.

It rained while we were in meeting, a sudden April dash. It was over when we came out, but the roofs of the wagon-sheds were still dripping. We walked over toward the graves of some "family connections" of the old lady. She wished to see if the lot where they lay were in proper upkeep. The water from a wagon-shed roof was falling drop by drop on the low marble headstone of Algernon Blank. "He is getting more water now," she said, "than he ever did when alive," but she did not deign to explain whether her sally had reference to that water's inside or outside application. Further on, we came to the grave of Veronica. "The last time I visited her alive," said the old lady, "she gave me mouldy aniseed cakes." Again she stopped before a stone and read off a name. "Father always quoted the Bible about Cousin Lemuel," she said, "that he was without form and void." All this was before the days of *The Spoon River Anthology.*

It was folks in the family connection she was thus disposing of That she would polish you off in a like phrase after you had chariioteered her home was possible, you could not help thinking. Yet it was hardly likely she would. She was grateful to those she managed. She said many nice things about such people, but she did not say too many nice things. It was necessary to make people who did things for you know that it was a privilege to do things for you. It was necessary to keep people in the places in which they belonged.

Much was to be forgiven this old lady because she was alive, not a characteristic of too many people. She had the gift of living intensely. To offset the strain caused by her many activities, she had to have a certain degree of comfort. To have the comfort that was necessary to her daily contentment she had maybe, to use her wits, to force herself upon people, to manage, to plot, to plan. She

never complained, she never faltered in her high-handedness, she never doubted the propriety or wisdom of her course. She had her way with the world in big things as well as in little. She broke friendships, she made matches, she cajoled men into taking certain of her protégées into their businesses. She commandeered her friends' carriages and coachmen to take her guests driving along the Wissahickon.

Another oldster of our neighborhood had many walks with Joseph Leidy as part of his life. One of these, I recall, was out to Marble Hall and back by way of Barren Hill to Chestnut Hill. The oldster liked to talk of the colony of purple martins they both delighted in, the colony under the eaves of the upper hotel in Barren Hill, and that Leidy said the birds always brought back his boyhood to him. The doctor liked to talk to me of the pollard willows and weeping willows of Sandy Run, and of bottoms of thorn-trees along its waters, thorn-trees that particularly stirred Leidy when their leaves were fallen and their red berries stood out sharply against the whorled branches. Most of all, however, he liked to talk of his walks with Leidy along the Wissahickon. There they came on nearly every bird that ever visits us, summer or winter, and there they found rare plants and rare insects. He knew Edward Drinker Cope, too, but better certain of Cope's kin that were his patients. He was as keenly interested in all phases of natural science as any physician of our neighborhood from Barton's day to Abbott's.

Dr. Textrinum, as I shall call him, was much more than the old-fashioned family physician, though to be that was enough for any man. He was more than the old-fashioned family physician with hobbies in ornithology and botany, proud of his local collections, and content, outside of his practice, to be remembered as the author of some little paper read before some little learned society. He was of this type, but his interests were much broader than the interests of most men of this type. He read widely, and not only

in fiction. Essays, biography, history, he liked to read and to talk about. He quoted bits of old poetry, most of them Latin. He bought pictures. He ran off to the shore of week-ends for a bit of fishing when he could get away, which was not often. He dabbled, unfortunately for him, in the stock market.

He knew all the gossip of the large sections of the hills to which his practice took him, but he had the gift of keeping to himself what he heard. He continued, as far as he could, the social contacts he had made as a young man. He loved talk, he was tireless in telling yarns. He had anecdotes of several generations of local and national celebrities, many of them gathered in his practice. He had trouble getting away from patients who were good listeners or who could add to his stock of stories. If critical cases awaited him elsewhere, he was in the house and out in a trice. He would bustle into the sickroom rubbing his hands, cheer up the most helpless invalid by his gayety and chaff, and by the sight of his high color and tan. All his practice was in the horse age and the driving over our hills in the open air kept him all his active years as ruddy as Old King Cole. If he came to visit you on his way home after a long round he would sometimes relax and talk and talk and talk. Sometimes a glass of wine helped him to relax, but he would touch nothing unless it was on the last call he had to make.

Dr. Textrinum hated to miss an exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts. He hardly ever did, because he could run in at any time of day, though not often for more than a quarter of an hour. That sometimes meant he saw only one picture, for if he cared for a picture he couldn't get away from it quickly. He had liked the theatre in his youth, but he seldom got to the theatre after he settled down to practice. He had to content himself with talking of performances in ante-bellum days. He belonged to the Academy of Natural Sciences but he had attended no meeting there for years. He thought the planning and execution of a good dinner was one of the fine arts, though he was no trencherman; he was almost abstemious, in fact. What he did eat was always of the best. There

was never anything but breast meat in the chicken sandwiches of Vienna bread his son took with him for lunch on all-day expeditions.

There were many "potentates goodly in girth" among his clients. He had sympathy for all ailments, but particular sympathy for the ailments supposedly aristocratic, like gout and nervous headaches. He was quick at diagnosis, and generally right in it. He had had so many cases through so many years. He was a bit of a tyrant with his patients, he put them to bed on the least provocation. He stood by staunchly in critical moments. He was as pleased as Punch when he had a hard case pull through. He couldn't help taking to heart the illness of a long-known patient, a weakness of his that helped to wear him down. Despite hard work for years, however, and things going wrong with many he loved, and bad investments, he lived to a ripe old age, weathering three attacks of pneumonia after he was seventy.

There are certain things out of doors I can never see without recalling Dr. Textrinum—the martins, the pollard willows and the thornbushes I have referred to, and winterberry bushes and redpolls. Years before I knew "bald holly," as the old colored vendors of Market Street called it, or "black alder," as they call it through the length and breadth of the New England States, he had identified red berries I found in a little swale above the Monastery as winterberry. It was not often that I saw redpolls, but one time he came to visit the house I had just come in from a chance glimpse of a large flock on my way home from the station. My reference to them set him off. "I well remember," he began, "the last I saw, ten years ago at any rate. I had the stethoscope to old S. S.'s chest when a drift of little birds with breasts of old rose and white wing-bars floated into the beech-grove just outside his window. I remember I said to myself, 'redpolls' with one breath, and 'pneumonia' with the next. The redpolls were more interesting than the pneumonia. I wasn't worried about old S. S., old sinners are hard to kill. That's what I told him. He got well, of course, but I never saw the redpolls outside his window again. I never saw such a flight of them as that first day of his pneumonia. They came into those beeches in hundreds on hundreds. They were just bits

of old rose, as good to look at as jewels. Beautiful, sir! beautiful beyond words. I walked around back of the house to find out what they were saying. They were making music, with twitters and little calls like those of salad-birds, with strange notes in between. I should like time for a vacation to Labrador to see them mating and to hear their full song!"

She is alive to her finger-tips at seventy-eight. She has the dignity of her age, and the sense of the tears of things that only a long life can bring. She is the best of company, as eager for an outing or for a party at home as any girl could be. She has the best of all gifts, the gift of caring for things and people. Everything in life, and every person she meets, interests her. She is as avid of gossip as a middle-aged spinster or a young matron. The little things of life are important to her. Indeed, it might almost be said that there are no little things in life for her. Everything matters.

There is plenty of her to go around in a wide circle of acquaintances. Her own large family, of three generations before her, comes first, of course, but her heart is so large there is room in it, too, for nephews and nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces, great-grandnephews and great-grandnieces, as well as for husband and children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She has a welcome before her in all the homes of all her people. She is none too strong, but she never broods over her health or her troubles. She is always too busy in being comradely to other people, in brightening them up by a visit or a telephone call, to give thought to her own complaints. She has had cheerfulness, serenity, and high spirits all her days. The world about her, so changed from the days of her youth, daunts her not at all. She is ready for anything.

She has the blessed gift of talk. She has, of course, a pleasant personality, but she is not content just to let her friendliness invest you. She tries, and successfully, to orient herself to your point of view and to discuss what will interest you. She gives you all her attention, but she sees what is going on around you and her at the

same time. If somebody at the dinner table is stranded in conversation, she rescues him by a remark that lets him loose on something he knows about. She is naturally agreeable, but she works hard to be a little more agreeable than is possible without labor. Most of us are too lazy for that. We are agreeable only when it is easy for us to be agreeable. She is agreeable by nature, and more than agreeable out of her sense of her duty to make everybody happy. Yet there is nothing namby-pamby about her. When she has to say something not wholly complimentary about someone, she says it simply, without exaggeration, without malice and with a deprecatory little moue.

She is truly charitable in her attitude to all. It is not only that it is part of her code to put the best face on things and to believe the best about a person is more important than the worst, but that she knows life is on the whole so good there is more than enough to enjoy even when a great deal goes wrong.

She does not think that the modern world is going to the dogs. Short skirts do not shock her. She even shortened those of one of her family she thought were too decorously long. She is convinced one must be of the age in which one lives. Yet she loves the old simplicities of life that she knew as a girl. She loves to shell peas, to dandle babies, to "arrange" flowers, to potter around the house and to fuss over old things that have been hers always and her forbears. She pats them now and then as she pretends to dust them. Her servants adore her, vigilant though she is in keeping tabs on their work. She is white haired, blue eyed, bright faced. She can still climb an apple ladder and stand a long sermon. She can entertain little children, one of the rarest accomplishments of grown-ups. She can do this because she has never lost her zest for play. She has never allowed the years to narrow her sympathies. She radiates human fellowship. She brings happiness and contentment wherever she goes. She is as young hearted as any girl I know. She is of the old stock, but, for all that, just folks. She dotes on the Wissahickon, God bless her!

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